

DE GRUYTER

BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND DECEPTIVE DICHOTOMIES IN PRE-MODERN TEXTS AND IMAGES

CULTURE, SOCIETY AND RECEPTION

Edited by Dafna Nissim and Vered Tohar



FUNDAMENTALS OF MEDIEVAL
AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE

Blurred Boundaries and Deceptive Dichotomies in Pre-Modern Texts and Images

Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture

Edited by
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

Volume 28

Blurred Boundaries and Deceptive Dichotomies in Pre-Modern Texts and Images



Culture, Society and Reception

Edited by
Dafna Nissim and Vered Tohar

DE GRUYTER

We thank the I Itzhak Akaviyahu Fund of Bar-Ilan University for the generous support of this book.

ISBN 978-3-11-124356-6

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-124389-4

e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-124410-5

ISSN 1864-3396

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023944393

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2024 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Acknowledgements

The conceptual frame of this book was initially formulated during the 2020 International Medieval Congress in Leeds, where two sessions organized by Dafna Nissim on “Blurred Boundaries between the Sacred and the Secular” brought together scholars from diverse disciplines working with different materials, who were studying cultural boundaries and the different ways they are expressed. The collaboration between Vered Tohar, who specializes in Early Modern Jewish literature, and Dafna Nissim, who explores late medieval visual culture, expanded the volume’s original scope to include other concepts apprehended in our period as pairs of dichotomies.

We would like to thank all the authors who devoted their time and expertise, for sharing their own perspectives on the theme. We hope and trust that this book will broaden scholarly interest in blurred cultural boundaries and be a significant contribution to the field.

We are immensely grateful to several of our colleagues for their invaluable assistance throughout the arduous process of producing the book. We especially want to thank Prof. Albrecht Classen and Prof. Marilyn Sandidge, whose erudite feedback, expertise, and generous support were greatly appreciated. They went above and beyond by reading the entire manuscript multiple times and providing constructive feedback to improve it. We also wish to thank the Akaviyahu Fund, Bar-Ilan University, for generously providing financial support for the production of the book.

Dafna Nissim and Vered Tohar

Beer-Sheva, 2023

Table of Contents

Dafna Nissim and Vered Tohar

Blurred Boundaries in Pre-Modern Texts and Images: Aspects of Audiences and Readers-Viewers Responses — 1

Albrecht Classen

The Sacred and the Profane in German Courtly Romances and Late Medieval Verse Narratives: With an Emphasis on Ulrich Bonerius and Heinrich Kaufringer — 15

Vered Tohar

The Poetic and Ideological Blurring of Boundaries in the Jewish Book of Ethics *Orhot Šaddiqim* — 41

Anne L. Williams

Laughing at Death: Blurred Boundaries in Giotto's *Last Judgment* — 57

Avia Shemesh

The Popular in Service of the Sacred: The Sculpted Musicians of Santiago de Compostela — 79

Sharon Khalifa-Gueta

Image and Legend of Saint Margaret as an Aid in Childbirth Rituals — 101

Tovi Bibring

Violent Women and the Blurring of Gender in some Medieval Narratives — 125

Revital Refael-Vivante

On the Heavenly and the Earthly, the Secular as Sacred – A New Reading of Medieval Hebrew Fables — 145

Dafna Nissim

The Secular and the Sacred in a Bifolio from *Louis of Laval's Book of Hours* and Its Spiritual Use — 165

Orly Amit

Between Psalter and “Mirrors for Princes”: On the Moral and Didactic Messages in BL Cotton MS Domitian A XVII — 185

Karen Casey Casebier

Visual and Textual Authority: Reading *Chevalier* in Manuscripts of *La Vie des pères* — 205

Serena Franzon

Aspects of Italian and Flemish Identity in Relation to Book Illumination: Reception of Devotional and Antiquarian Ideas through Depictions of Jewelry — 229

List of Illustrations — 249

Notes on Contributors — 253

Index — 255

Dafna Nissim and Vered Tohar

Blurred Boundaries in Pre-Modern Texts and Images: Aspects of Audiences and Readers-Viewers Responses

Abstract: This article explores recent scholarship on the dynamic interaction among artistic manifestations of various categories, such as sacred and secular, male and female, real and fictional, and conflicting emotions in pre-modern texts and images. Inspired by Hans Georg Gadamer's perspective on interpretation and reader-response criticism, it examines how audiences perceived and received these works from a socio-historical standpoint. Relevant research reveals that medieval societies did not rigidly adhere to these cognitive categories as absolute dichotomies. Instead, for reading communities, art viewers, and object users, these categories are often blended, negotiated, and intertwined with one another. This perspective challenges earlier paradigms that depicted domains such as sacred and secular as separate and hierarchical. It argues that medieval audiences adeptly navigated between the holy and the mundane, embracing the fluidity of these concepts without experiencing cognitive dissonance. The aesthetic preferences of the authors and artists played a significant role in connecting the moral and spiritual dimensions of artistic works with everyday life experiences, presenting a pre-modern understanding of the permeability of these concepts.

Keywords: secular; sacred; lay people; reader's share; Reader-Response criticism; reception studies

In his book *Wahrheit und Methode*, which was published in 1960, Hans Georg Gadamer wrote, in the English translation, "The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it."¹ This perception laid the groundwork for his theorization of the nature of knowledge and the nature of interpretation. In Gadamer's view, interpretation is a process in which the habitus of reading can or might impact the reader and become a way of experiencing life. A reader approaches a text with a set of preconceptions and the process of reading and interpreting enables self-reflection. Gadamer right-

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheim and Donald G. Marshall (1960; London and New York: Continuum, 1989), 103.

fully associated the audience's experience and interpretation with the actualization of a work of art or literature. The perspective on visual and verbal imagery not only as products of a genius mind but also seeing them as agencies communicating with humans influences both scholars of literature and art historians.² Theoreticians of Reader-Response criticism, which was constructed and theorized in the 1960s/1970s in the United States and Germany, contend that interpretation is a result of the reader's share or involvement.³ This approach suggests that every reader is a product of his socio-cultural-historical background and that individuals from similar backgrounds tend to read texts in a similar way.⁴ A comparable shift in paradigm had already occurred in art studies, and the seminal works of Alfred Gell, David Friedberg, Herbert Kessler, and Hans Belting paved the way to interpret and reveal the significance and influence of visual and material products in human life.⁵

The point of departure in this book is the reception of medieval and early modern textual and visual works that reflect the dialectics between the sacred

2 In this sense, the anonymity of most medieval artists and artisans prevented art historians from focusing on the genius of an illustrious artist, as was the case of the discourse on Renaissance art in Italy from the end of the nineteenth century until roughly the mid-twentieth century. As David Areford observes, "One could argue that medievalists have long been at the forefront of reception studies, in that artistic anonymity is a commonplace aspect of most medieval images." David S. Areford, "Reception," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 73–88; here 74.

3 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (1978; Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in the Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1976; Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

4 For recent studies dealing with the power of the literary work on the human mind and the influence of the written text and the oral transmission, see *Storytelling and Ethics: Literature, Visual Arts, and the Power of Narrative*, ed. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (New York and London: Routledge, 2017); Gunter Blamberg, *Thinking in Literature: On the Fascination and Power of Aesthetic Ideas*, trans. Joel Golb (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021). Also see how the theory and methodologies of reader-response criticism influence recent studies on emotions in medieval text: *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, ed. Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne J. Saunders. *Arthurian Studies*, 83 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2015); *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

5 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Herbert L. Kessler, *Experiencing Medieval Art. Rethinking the Middle Ages*, 1 (Toronto, Buffalo, NY, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

and the secular, male and female attributes, the real and the fictional, and opposing emotions. Our exploration derives from the consideration that individuals in medieval and early modern societies did not necessarily consider categories such as sacred and secular as absolute dichotomies. On the contrary, recent scholarship clarifies that although such concepts did prevail in medieval thought, they carried a degree of confluence, negotiation, and permeability unlike the way they are understood in the popular culture nowadays.⁶ The texts and images explored in the following pages reveal a blurring of boundaries, as contributors deal with such questions as: What kinds of semantic, cognitive, or ideological categories appear in the texts or visual works? How are they expressed in those works, and what sort of relationships do they establish? How did those blurred boundaries affect the readers/viewers? How might the readers'/viewers' interaction with the visual or literary work have influenced the way they perceived themselves and the world?

Further, our goal is to describe, prove, and illustrate the idea that the complex and sophisticated intertextual system and the relationships between text and image, text and para-text, and different iconographic details produce a way of thinking about the world.⁷ These relationships, which determined artistic strategies and/or literary rhetoric, demonstrate the various ways such works addressed their audiences and how the authors and artists viewed the horizon of their readers'/viewers' expectations. In this respect, we embrace the notion that, especially in the pre-modern world, an artist created a work for an audience. The creation of an appraised painting or a poem cannot be reduced to the singular genius of an artist or an author as an autonomic individual, but rather as Hans Robert Jauss

6 For an overview of the theme in Western culture, see *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures: New Essays*, ed. Lawrence Besserman. New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). For a survey of the historiography of the concepts in medieval art history, see *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art: Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist*, ed. Amanda Luyster and Alicia Walker (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

7 The classic work of Gerard Genette, *Paratexts*, 1987, was followed by many studies. See a recent implementation: *The Dynamics of Text and Framing Phenomena: Historical Approaches to Paratext and Metadiscourse in English*, ed. Brite Bos and Matti Peikola (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2020). For a more specific group of studies close to our field of discussion, see *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). See also Rosalind Brown-Grant, "Prologues and Frontispieces in Prose Romance Manuscripts," *Inscribing Knowledge in the Medieval Book: The Power of Paratexts*, ed. Rosalind Brown-Grant, Patrizia Carmassi, Gisela Drossbach, Anne D. Hedeman, Victoria Turner, and Iolanda Ventura (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 247–65.

argued: “Every writer is dependent upon the milieu, views, and ideology of his readers.”⁸

The essays in this book consider the audience of the work of literature or art – whether royal, noble, church authority, or commoner. Even if it is not explicitly stated, the authors take into account the readership of the explored texts, the intended users of a work of art, and/or the mixed audiences who benefited from monumental artworks. It has to be noted that the works discussed here usually were not intended directly for Christians who lived lives of abstinence in monasteries, secluded from the bustle of the city, who kept their interactions with lay people to a minimum. Most of the texts related to here were written in the vernacular, intended for the bourgeoisie, who could afford the costs of printed books, and the nobility and royalty, who could commission illuminated manuscripts, as well as the crowds who attended public sermons.⁹ As many of the works were presented in the public arena, they were observed by all ethnicities, all genders, and all cultures.

Often the intended readership was declared on the cover of the pre-modern book, in the title, or in the author’s preface. Those features present the horizon of influence of the text, although, in reality, texts generally reached wider audiences than expected. In the context of engagement with visual imagery, the locations of works of art and the medium can serve as indicators of the initial patrons or communities that viewed and engaged with the work.¹⁰ Research that focuses on the audience, the individuals and/or the community that consumed the work,

8 Hans Robert Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” trans. Elizabeth Benzing-er, *New Literary History* 2.1 (1970): 7–37; here 15–16.

9 During this period, aural and literacy played a key role in the acquisition of textual content as books were read in public and in private: Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 26 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Eli Yassif also stresses the ways in which oral content often derived from written sources was transmitted and disseminated to Jewish audiences: Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

10 Some recent scholarly works focus on the issue of the expected audience of a work of art. Studying stone reliefs on church facades and/or stained-glass windows with an eye toward the liturgies performed in and outside churches (e.g., processions) and toward pilgrims visiting the sites is an important approach in defining the viewing audience for an understanding of religious art. The work of Margot Fassler is an early example of interest in revealing meaning by considering an audience in a performative space: Margot Fassler, “Liturgy and Sacred History in the Twelfth-Century Tympana at Chartres,” *The Art Bulletin* 75.3 (1993): 499–520. For a recent study involving the question of an audience as a starting point, see Conrad Rudolph, “Macro/Microcosm at Vézelay: The Narthex Portal and Non-Elite Participation in Elite Spirituality,” *Speculum* 96.3 (2021): 601–61.

which could include the learned as well as the illiterate,¹¹ of different social ranks, can help map interpretations based on their previous cultural experiences.¹²

It is also important to note that the readers'/listeners'/viewers' familiarity with the context of the work – the genre, the form, the praxis of use, and the themes – was basic for understanding the content.¹³ Despite differences in social status, gender, and education, for most pre-modern audiences, the flux of the sacred/profane, or other dialectic concepts probably did not cause a serious cognitive dissonance or any other incompatibility. The occupations and ways of life of pre-modern Europeans, as well as of people living in the middle-eastern and far-eastern territories, juxtaposed their experiences of the mundane and the sacred, often allowed a virtually seamless blend of their real secular lives and their spiritual ideas.¹⁴ Indeed, religious authorities usually employed a rhetorical opposition of sacred/profane to warn their believers against reading secular texts or exposing themselves to other secular works.¹⁵ However, more often than not, life experiences accommodated a spectrum of engagements with religious and secular activities.

11 For more on approaches to readership, see Andrew Bennett, *Readers and Reading* (1995; New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 4–7. This is where questions of literacy first arose, as he focused on the ability of the reader's community to understand a text and to respond to it. As literacy spread, more and more readers were exposed to all sorts of new ideas, acquired knowledge and became self-aware – in a cultural surrounding that blended holiness and secularity.

12 This perspective diverges from iconographical readings of art in the first half of the twentieth century. Panofsky, a prominent representative of this approach, and others sought the interpretation of visual imagery in the writings of Church authorities or in classical works. Brendan Cassidy, "Introduction: Iconography, Texts, and Audiences," *Iconography at the Crossroads: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, March 23–24, 1990*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Department of Art and Archaeology, 1993), 3–15; here 7.

13 Studying, e.g., folktales embedded in non-fictional texts, Vered Tohar suggests several factors that assist in understanding their context. For example, a folktale that opens a printed essay is to be viewed differently from one that is embedded in a middle of an oral sermon or is an addition to a biblical commentary. Another consideration would be the different effects of literary genres and the different readers' expectations of all kinds of paratexts: Vered Tohar, *The Book of Tales, Sermons and Legends (Ferrara 1554): An Anthology of Hebrew Stories from the Print Era, An Annotated Edition* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2016), 171–78.

14 See, for example, Wendy M.K. Shaw, "The Islam in Islamic Art History: Secularism and Public Discourse," *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (2012): 1–34.

15 Associating it with profane activities, preachers in Florence emphasized the worthlessness of popular literature in the early modern period and its dangerous influence on Christians. Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) claimed that books such *The Decameron* warped many miserable souls. Bernardino da Siena (1380–1444) cautioned his congregation not to read the untrustworthy books of Boccaccio. Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Renaissance Florence in the Rhetoric of Two Popular Preachers*:

An exploration of texts and images embracing this perspective can contribute to our understanding of medieval and pre-modern consciousness. Rhetorical tactics can testify to the cognitive ability of authors to respond to their clientele's aesthetic tastes while bridging the gap between the moral demands of the Church and the secular way of life.¹⁶ The *Chanson de geste*, for example, is rife with diverse relationships among classical iconography, profane figures, religious ideas, and biblical paraphrases.¹⁷ As suggested by Katrin Kogman-Appel in relation to Jewish manuscripts,¹⁸ the study of the three-way relationship (the patron, the artist, and the viewer) can shed light on the broad consciousness of mixed textual ideas and poetic strategies that appear together in a literary work.

Recent studies tend to depart from binary assumptions that lead to anachronistic interpretations, but this was not always the case. In the middle of the twentieth century, the study of the sacred and the profane in medievalist literary criticism was dominated by two paradigms. The first, best represented by the work of Clive Staples Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* apprehends the secular and the sacred in medieval literature as two distinct spheres that have their own paradigms and structures.¹⁹ The second, developed by D. W. Robertson, a scholar of medieval English literature, formulated a model of hierarchy in which the secular is always subordinate to religious thought. In *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*, he established an approach to exegesis based on the *Patrologia Latina*.²⁰ According to Robertson, Chaucer's audience was mostly educated and read his works with an eye toward Christian values.²¹

Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) and Bernardino da Siena (1380–1444). Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 110.

¹⁶ *The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France*, ed. Dorothea Kullmann. Toronto Studies in Romance Philology, 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), 7–8.

¹⁷ Cyril Aslanov, *New Perspectives on the Sacred and the Secular in Old French and Old Provençal Poetry* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

¹⁸ Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Pictorial Messages in Mediaeval Illuminated Hebrew Books: Some Methodological Considerations," *Jewish Manuscript Cultures: New Perspectives*, ed. Irina Wandrey. Studies in Manuscript Cultures, 13 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 443–67.

¹⁹ Clive S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936; London: Oxford University Press, 1968). For an overview of this approach, see William Robins and Robert Epstein, "Introduction: The Sacred, the Profane, and Late Medieval Literature," *Sacred and Profane in Chaucer and Late Medieval Literature, Essays in Honour of John V. Fleming*, ed. Robert Epstein and William Robins (Toronto, Buffalo, NY, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 3–29; here 16.

²⁰ For a survey of Robertson's approach and its critics, see Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 1–3.

²¹ Kathy Cawsey, *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences* (London: Routledge, 2016), 93–95.

The origins of these two approaches are to be found in the opposing categories so common in social theories, political thinking, and culture studies of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. The belief in rationality, universalism, and logocentrism, fundamental ideas of the Enlightenment era, mandated this kind of discourse. The postmodern shift in patterns of thinking “challenged the emphasis upon universalism by emphasizing both the relativity and the contract- edness of knowledge or so-called ‘truth.’”²² Scholars studying texts and works of art in past societies were ever more cautious in their interpretations. With Derrida’s Theory of Deconstruction in mind,²³ recent studies employ a sensitive “reading” that draws attention, for example, to differences in female/male representations. Some of them reveal the unstable nature of gender, which cannot be interpreted as the traditional opposition of the fixed terms “man” and “woman.”²⁴

In the last twenty years, studies have been sensitive to the sacred and the temporal in the early modern Western and Eastern worlds and have yielded new definitions of the relationship between the two. As Amanda Luyster and Alicia Walker note, the theme reveals the “fluidity of [sacred/profane] categories and their productive confluence.”²⁵ Museum curators in the last decades have followed a similar approach, one that was highlighted in two exhibitions devoted to art in the western world: “The Secular Spirit: Life and Art at the End of the Middle Ages” at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1975 and the “Secular/Sacred: 11th- to 16th-Century Works from the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Public Library” at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, in 2006. This new sensitivity appears in exhibitions of Islamic and Chinese art, e.g., “The Sacred and Secular: Islamic Calligraphy from the 9th to the 20th Century,” at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, in 1989, “Secular and Sacred: Scholars, Deities, and Immortals in Chinese Art” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2006. In considering medieval art, Nancy Netzer, the editor of the “Secular and Sacred” catalogue, asserts “Just as there is no clear dividing line between sacred and secular medieval

22 Fiona Williams, “Postmodernism, Feminism and the Question of Difference,” *Social Theory, Social Change and Social Work*, ed. Nigel Parton (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 61–76; here 63.

23 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1967; Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

24 Rosemarie McGerr, “Bridge Essay: Gender and Representation: New Approaches to Medieval Literature,” *A Companion to World Literature*, ed. Ken Seigneurie, 6 vols. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 2: 1–7. See also: Blake Gutt, “Transgender Genealogy in Tristan de Nanteuil,” *Exemplaria* 30.2 (2018): 129–46.

25 *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art*, ed. Luyster and Walker (see note 6).

texts, neither can such a boundary be established between [art] objects.”²⁶ Mounting combined exhibitions of objects, sculptures, and paintings that were displayed separately in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries according to their initial function paved new ways toward understanding the roles of such categories in the life of past individuals and communities.²⁷

Barbara Newman’s influential concept “A Hermeneutics of Both/And,” introduced in her study of late medieval secular texts, created an inspiring approach to the theme of blurred boundaries. In her view, the secular and the sacred might flow together side by side in medieval figurative or literal artistic expression and/or blend with each other, but in neither case do they contradict one another.²⁸ Her case studies demonstrate that medieval and pre-modern audiences accepted the blurring, negotiated contradicting meanings, and lived peaceably with the fluidity. What scholars might now see as an impossible contradiction was probably natural and trivial to the pre-modern addressees.²⁹

Apart from the concepts of blurriness and boundaries, we attempt to refer to the ways the work addresses the reading/viewing communities.³⁰ This perspective is discussed in cultural theory under the designation reception studies. In the field of medieval art history, the question of reception can branch off in many directions. As Madeline Harrison Caviness notes in “Reception of Images by Medieval

26 Nancy Netzer, “Secular and Sacred Objects from the Middle Ages: Illuminating the History of Classification,” *Secular Sacred: 11th–16th Century Works from the Boston Public Library and the Museum of Fine Arts*, ed. Nancy Netzer (Boston: McMullen Museum of Art, 2006), 11–18; here 11.

27 The eighteenth-century founding of two institutions in Rome, The Museo Sacro, and the Museo Profano, highlights the distinction between “secular” and “religious” objects: Netzer, “Secular and Sacred Objects from the Middle Ages” (see note 26), 14.

28 Newman, *Medieval Crossover* (see note 20).

29 The paradigmatic modern thinking on sacred/secular that views them as opposing categories is best explained by the theory of Owen Chadwick, which stresses that the secularization of the Western world in the nineteenth century engendered a heightened awareness of the difference between the secular and the sacred realms. Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century: The Gifford Lectured in the University of Edinburgh for L973/4* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

30 We draw on Alfred Gell’s idea that works of art function as social agents that cause events “to happen in their vicinity.” Gell, *Art and Agency* (see note 5), 16. Some of the contributors lean on Wolfgang Kemp’s theory of reception aesthetics, which explores the ways a work of art communicates with the viewer. Wolfgang Kemp, “The Work of Art and Its Beholder: The Methodology of the Aesthetics of Reception,” *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Mark A. Cheetham and Michael A. Holly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 180–96.

Viewers,”³¹ scholars of medieval history look for ways to explore the reception of ancient artistic formulas,³² and ask questions regarding aesthetic evaluation of artworks by contemporary audiences.³³

In contrast to the approaches that consider reception as “[t]he action or fact of receiving or acquiring” a person, an object or an idea,³⁴ we lean on another definition of reception, which implies “the action of accepting or admitting” an idea, law, or Divine Truth; the action of receiving mentally; comprehension (OED, 7b, 3b). This alternative definition expands the physical acquisition of an object or a person and indicates a mental path by which one receives an idea. Thus, one must consider the perceptual system – the network of beliefs, presumptions, and norms of viewing/reading/hearing – from a historical perspective. By so doing one deviates from psychological and neuroscience approaches that explore the performance of reading and the observation of artworks that so frequently ignore the historical dimensions of the perceptual experience of people in past so-

31 Madeline Harrison Caviness, “Reception of Images by Medieval Viewers,” *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 65–85.

32 The scholarship using this approach is vast. See, e.g., Anna Boreczky, “Introduction: Classical Heritage & Medieval Innovation,” *Convivium* 3.1 (2016): 15–19; *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. Eva R. Hoffman (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). In many senses, the use of *spolia* in certain cases can be understood as a result of the reception of earlier artistic products. It emphasizes the act of acquiring, which has multilayered meanings, sometimes standing in opposition to its original function and reception. See, e.g., Philippe Cordez, *Trésor, mémoire, merveilles: les objets des églises au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Editions de l’EHESS, 2016).

33 Primary sources that allude to a spontaneous burst of emotions, a process of comprehension or aesthetic evaluation, are rare before the sixteenth century. However, documents describing the function and meaning of objects and images by Church authorities, inventories describing the materiality, weight, and precise iconographies of objects, and poetic phrases that express admiration of precious materials allow for a limited discourse on aesthetic evaluation in this period: Meyer Schapiro, “On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art,” *Selected Papers: Romanesque Art*, ed. Meyer Schapiro (1947; New York: George Braziller, 1977), 1–27; Thomas Alexander Heslop, “Attitudes to the Visual Arts: The Evidence from Written Sources,” *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England*, ed. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Royal Academy of Arts and Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 26–32; Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (1958; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). See also how Caviness analyzes the blind spots in these studies: Caviness, “Reception of Images by Medieval Viewers” (see note 31). For a new publication on this issue, see Michele Tomasi, “Prix des œuvres et appréciation esthétique à la fin du XIV^e siècle en France: quelques remarques à partir des chroniques de Jean Froissart et Michel Pintoin,” *Art et économie en France et en Italie au XIV^e siècle. Prix, Valeurs, Carrières*, ed. Nicolas Bock and Michele Tomasi (Lausanne: Faculté des lettres de l’Université de Lausanne, 2020), 155–76.

34 *Oxford English Dictionary*, “Reception” (2a, 3a).

cieties.³⁵ The idea that the process by which audiences create meaning was and is always a result of socio-cultural-historical reality offers a new perspective on the notion of blurred boundaries. It suggests that the boundary/blurring concept is a product of a certain cultural context and that different reading communities did and would develop different concepts of boundaries and different conceptions of blurring or at least different sensitivities to those cultural products.

We realized that arranging the chapters in this book according to genres or blurred areas would fix their association and significance on a limited range of state of mind. We decided instead to arrange them in a more fluid way, moving from exploration and interpretation of the literature to an understanding of the role of dialectic concepts in monumental art, from the exploration of images and words in handwritten manuscripts to the examination of the interrelationship of opposing concepts in printed books. We hope and trust that this arrangement will allow for many different readings and views of the subjects discussed in each chapter.

In the first chapter, Albrecht Classen introduces a holistic look at the works of late medieval poets to illuminate the degree to which the religious informed the worldly and the other way round. He finds impressive manifestations of the secular and religious intermingling in many late medieval verse narratives, such as those by Ulrich Bonerius and Heinrich Kaufringer. The Swiss Preacher Ulrich Bonerius addresses all kinds of human shortcomings and comments on the need for spirituality in handling them through the lens of fables. Whereas some of Kaufringer's *maeren* are determined by religious issues (piety and devotion), others address ordinary situations in everyday life, while still others deal with the hybrid nature of all human existence, with the human body claiming its own stake and the spirit demanding, as Kaufringer observed, its own space.

Vered Tohar also explores literary texts. Her chapter emerges out of dozens of medieval folktales that were included in Jewish pre-modern non-fiction morality essays. This combination of literary folkloristic material and non-fiction moral homilies creates a unique blend of the secular and the sacred. The two may subvert one another, but they also support each other in building a multi-dimensional

35 As Rob Boddice claims in reference to the exploration of emotions in past societies: "There is no culture-free or value-neutral context to the study of human 'nature,' and there is no 'nature' without framed biology." Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions*. Historical Approaches (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 10. For recent studies on human response to visual imagery, see for example Carmen Concerto et al., "Observation of Implied Motion in a Work of Art Modulates Cortical Connectivity and Plasticity," *Journal of Exercise Rehabilitation* 12.5 (2016): 417–23; Mel W. Khaw, Phoebe Nichols, and David Freedberg, "Speed of Person Perception Affects Immediate and Ongoing Aesthetic Evaluation," *Acta Psychologica* 197 (2019): 166–76.

piece of literature. She suggests a methodological contribution: reading Jewish moral pre-modern literature as a manifestation of four textual dimensions: genre, function, poetic, and rhetoric. Those dimensions enable the literary interpretation and offer an explanation for the acceptance and preservation of those texts through the last 400 years of Jewish culture.

Moving from the world of words to that of monumental art, Anne Williams deals with Giotto's Last Judgment (ca. 1303–1305). On the west wall of the Arena Chapel in Padua, the fresco features intriguing details: demons mimicking angels and bureaucrats, diseased sinners trying to hide (ironically) behind the cross, clerics bribing cardinals, and old lechers still attempting to buy sex. She suggests interpreting those scenes through the lens of Trecento humor and suggests that Giotto's wit complicates the traditional separation of "profane" humor from "sacred" themes in fourteenth-century ecclesiastical painting and blurs the boundaries between pleasure and fear.

Avia Shemesh explores the complex sculpted program in the refectory of the Archbishop's Palace in Santiago de Compostela. She describes multiple images of a courtly banquet complete with food service, dining, and entertainment, including figures of musicians, who were generally present at such feasts. Symbolic scenes were incorporated with these commonplace elements to create a dual interpretation of the scene as a parallel representation of earthly and heavenly banquets. Through the figures of the musicians, questions of musical iconography and its meaning come to light, alongside a clear reflection of the relationship between patrons and audiences.

Focusing on objects of medieval rituals, Sharon Khalifa-Gueta discusses the iconography of St. Margaret and the Dragon, emphasizing the gap between the saint's legend and her visualization in medieval art. She refers to the pagan sources of the image and to its secular and folkloristic perspectives, suggesting that the figure of St. Margaret is a mirror image of demons that prevent fertility, such as Lilith, and was conceived as part of the historic development of the motif of "the woman and the dragon" and an anguiped (half-woman and half-dragon) image, intending to chase away her mirror rivals. Thus, it is clear that the portrayal sprang from the secular folk sphere and was adopted and clothed in Christianized sacred schemes.

Tovi Bibring's chapter focuses on literary depictions of women's attempts to challenge the phallogentric patriarchal society and resist the masculine established order by displaying violent or even murderous behavior toward men in French medieval literature. She contends that such brutal scenes were often cloaked as comic narratives and were perceived by the readers as nothing more than fiction – literary events that would never be seen in reality. She discusses the blurred boundaries between masculine and feminine behavior as they are dealt with in

the twelfth-century romance *Cligès* by Chrétien de Troyes, Féenice's *fausse mort*, *Lai d'Iguanré*, by Renaut, and the Hebrew *Tale of Old Bearded Achbor* by Yaakov Ben Elazar.

Revital Refael-Vivante offers some insights regarding the conceptions of holy and secular in one of the popular medieval Hebrew books of fables: *Meshal HaQadmoni* (The Fable of the Ancient) by Isaac ben Shlomo Ibn Sahula, composed in Castile in 1281. Although Ibn Sahula was a biblical scholar and even engaged in Kabbalah, he also practiced medicine and was knowledgeable regarding contemporary scientific theories and mindsets. Thus, he had a broad worldview, and his writing corresponds to the general context of his time and place. Refael-Vivante discusses Ibn Sahula's references to sacred and secular issues within the context of the medieval general and Jewish cultural perception and illustrates the synthesis between the concepts of sacred and secular in *Meshal HaQadmoni*.

In a chapter about a bifolio from a Book of Hours made for Louis of Laval, Dafna Nissim explores the blurred boundaries between the sacred and the secular in such portraits. She contends that as in other portraits of noble devotees praying to the Virgin and Child, in Laval's Book of Hours, the two parts of the bifolio were designed to give the owner a sense of familiarity with the sacred figures. Through a series of choices, the artist suggested the shared character of the secular and profane figures, that is, their humanness, and other points of similarity. The cognitive-emotional experience of kinship might well have encouraged the devotee to aspire toward spiritual union with the Divine.

In her study of a fourteenth-century illuminated text, Orly Amit discusses the blurred boundaries of medieval book genres through a case study of a richly illuminated Psalter (BL, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII), produced in Paris in the early fifteenth century, which was originally intended for the dauphin Louis, Duke of Guyenne (1397–1415). Study of the text/image relationship within Louis's personal Psalter reveals the intertextuality within the scenes in regard to the relationship between the reader/viewer and God and that between the owner and his destined role as a monarch. Amit argues that, among other concerns, the Psalter was designed to serve as a "Mirror of Princes," to teach the moral values expected of an ideal prince and king. Hence, the book provided not only spiritual but also secular guidance, which was meant to shape the identity and patterns of behavior of the young prince.

Karen Casebier explores the text and image of *Chevalier*, a tale from *La Vie des pères*. In this miracle tale, a pious knight is so enraptured by the Mass that he fails to report to the tournament field, foregoing an opportunity to win earthly glory and riches in favor of spiritual enlightenment. He then learns that the Virgin Mary has replaced him in the tournament and has defeated all the knights on the field. The story highlights the conflation between the sacred and the profane

by heightening the tension between the knight's secular pursuits and his religious devotion. However, *Chevalier* is also a tale that conflates text and image, precisely because a coherent narrative whose edifying message demonstrates the essential Christian truth of faith, grace, and mercy only emerges when the illuminations that accompany it in the original manuscript are 'read' together with the text.

In the concluding chapter, Serena Franzon focuses on the depictions of jewels on the borders of illuminated books, a decorative motif that was widespread in both Flemish and Italian illuminations throughout the second half of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century. Borders, text, and images could be seen as interacting, and representations of similar jewels in different contexts, secular or sacred, could convey different meanings. Franzon highlights the way these depictions influenced self-construction of Flemish Christians and how this motif lost its religious value in Italy, becoming instead a symbol of Renaissance antiquarian identity.

In conclusion, the contributions to this book describe cultural worlds that do not present binary oppositions as mandatory. A post-modern interpretation of the cultural expressions in the pre-modern Christian and Jewish worlds, whether verbal or visual, produces a kaleidoscopic arena of blurred boundaries. This finding puts the mentality of pre-modern different audiences and communities in a whole new perspective.

Albrecht Classen

The Sacred and the Profane in German Courtly Romances and Late Medieval Verse Narratives: With an Emphasis on Ulrich Bonerius and Heinrich Kaufringer

Abstract: It might amount to carrying coals to Newcastle to re-emphasize the great importance of Christianity for medieval literature. The sacred and the profane constantly interlace each other throughout the pre-modern world, both in narratives and poetry, in music, and in art works. But what does the interplay actually entail for the various texts, and how do various poets inject the spiritual into their commonly secular accounts? By drawing our attention to a selection of some of the most famous Middle High German romances (including a heroic epic) and courtly love, and then of some late medieval didactic and entertaining verse narratives, this study carefully profiles the powerful interplay of these two dimensions within the literary discourse, illustrating the extent to which both contributed significantly to the deeper development of the message contained in each text or groups of texts.

Keywords: the sacred; the profane; *Nibelungenlied*; Hartmann von Aue; Wolfram von Eschenbach; Gottfried von Strassburg; Ulrich Bonerius; Heinrich Kaufringer

Introduction: Religion and Culture

Even though our modern world seems to have lost a sense of the spiritual dimension, in reality, the thirst for spirituality is very present and palpable, though fewer and fewer people, at least in the West, seek it within an organized Church. The situation within Islam, Hinduism, Shintoism, or Buddhism might be quite different, but secularism is marching forward there as well.¹ However, it is a march toward the void, the meaningless, the abstract, and terrifyingly rational.

¹ See, for instance, Mika T. Lassander, *Post-Materialist Religion: Pagan Identities and Value Change in Modern Europe* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); Richard Cimino and Christopher Smith, *Atheist Awakening: Secular Activism and Community in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe: The Development of Secularity and Non-religion*, ed. Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel, and David Václavík. Routledge Studies in Religion (London and New York: Routledge, 2020). Significantly, there are relevant studies on religion or secularism

By the same token, religion is a rather intangible entity, yet we would not be able to identify any society throughout history where it would not have mattered in one way or the other, even when a socialist government, for instance, actively fought against it, such as in the Soviet Union. One of the reasons for this phenomenon might be that the sacred is simply there as the ultimate opposite to the material within the earthly existence, whether the individual recognizes it or not. Even Friedrich Nietzsche acknowledged it when he charged his contemporaries with having killed God, at least here on earth, appealing to them to restore the faith and return to the acknowledgment of the sacred.² We as human beings are much more than just physical entities, and the realization that we feel, think, hope and desire, and sense easily opens the perspective toward another dimension, however we might want to call it. While we intuitively know that we consist of interiority and exteriority, the true discovery of the spiritual within us might be tantamount to an epiphany, or a mystical experience, and this both in the past and in the present, since religion is, as Daniel C. Dennett calls it, a “natural phenomenon.”³

for almost every country on the globe. The issue of religion hence continues to be of extreme spiritual, but also deeply political significance.

2 Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); *Social Identities Between the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. Aby Day, Giselle Vincett, and Christopher R. Cotter. Ashgate AHRC, ESRC Religion and Society Series (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013); *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400–1550): Reading, Worshipping, and Connecting Through the Continuum of Sacred and Secular*, ed. Suzan Folkerts. New Communities of Interpretation, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021). See also Dudley Young, *Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), xxix: “The call of primitive ecstasy is the call of the wild, and for modern man, as my generation was reminded in the sixties, it ends in tears. We are still not ready for it, and yet it remains the dream we deeply dream.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans., with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), Part Three: *What is Religion*, 57–76, esp. ch. 56, 68. In his *The Gay Sciences (Fröhliche Wissenschaften, 1882)*, Nietzsche had formulated this monumental observation with which he provoked both theologians and philosophers to the bottom of their foundation: “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?” Quoted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_dead (last accessed on May 24, 2023).

3 Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin, 2006). He stated, for instance, “Religions are among the most powerful natural phenomena on the planet, and we need to understand them better if we are to make informed and just political

Some modern states or nations have taken a clear stance against the spiritual or religious, but this process might be nothing but resorting to a miscued pressure cooker; the religious ideals or notions then reemerge at alternate locations or within private groups, especially because the question regarding the meaning of human life can never be fully answered in material terms.⁴

As much as religion is often questioned today by various sections of modern society, there is no doubt about its great impact and relevance in many different cultural manifestations and many groups of the contemporary world population.⁵ The European Middle Ages were certainly deeply determined by Christianity, and then also by Judaism and Islam, at least in the Mediterranean regions. This is not to say that every individual within the Western world was and is a faithful believer; even in the pre-modern period, there were some whom we would identify as atheists, at least in philosophical terms.⁶ And Christianity itself was a religion

decisions" (28). See also Eric Dietrich, *Excellent Beauty: The Naturalness of Religion and the Unnaturalness of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Jean-Luc Marion, *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); the literature on this topic is legion, addressing the issue from a scholarly and a lay perspective.

4 Kerry O'Halloran, *State Neutrality: The Sacred, the Secular, and Equality Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). The abstract provided by the publisher emphasizes: "This book conducts a comparative legal analysis of the church-state relationship within and between western countries – including the USA, France and Israel – that are key players in international and domestic dynamics in which religion and religious conflict take centre stage."

5 Anway Mukhopadhyay, *Literary and Cultural Readings of Goddess Spirituality: The Red Shadow of the Mother* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017); *Religion and Difference: Contested Contemporary Issues*, ed. Trygve Wyller, Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati, Stefanie Knauss, Hans-Günter Heimbrock, Hans-Joachim Sander, and Carla Danani. *Research in Contemporary Religion*, 28 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2020); *Civil Religion Today: Religion and the American Nation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Rhys H. Williams, Raymond Haberski Jr., and Philip Goff (New York: New York University, 2021). The number of relevant studies on this topic is legion, which by itself indicates the enormous importance of religion or the war waged against it all over the world. Ironically, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic since 2019, increasingly people claim a 'sincerely-held belief' against vaccination, whether this is sheer hypocrisy or an honest realization. See Anna Merlan, *Republic of Lies American Conspiracy Theorists and Their Surprising Rise to Power* (London: Random House Books, 2019).

6 Peter Dinzelbacher, *Unglaube im "Zeitalter des Glaubens": Atheismus und Skeptizismus im Mittelalter* (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2009). Despite his best efforts, however, to confirm the presence of atheism in the Middle Ages, he himself concedes at the end: "Gewiß handelte es sich nur um meist punktuelle Widersetzlichkeiten gegen die sehr weitgehend das gesamte Leben durchdringende kirchenkonforme Frömmigkeit der Epoche" (151; Granted, we observe only solitary opposition against the Church-conforming piety which permeated the entire life of that period). He highlights, in his *Das fremde Mittelalter: Gottesurteil und Tierprozess*. 2nd, extensively expanded ed. Schriftenreihe des Mittelalterlichen Kriminalmuseums Rothenburg

that had to be imported, disseminated, taught, and enforced or imposed on people throughout time, with so-called paganism continuing to hold sway for a long time, if it has ever been fully repressed. To state the obvious, religion mattered critically in almost every aspect of daily life then, and we would have a hard time comprehending any pre-modern literary text (or art work) without recognizing the duality of the secular and religious always playing hand in hand, as Barbara Newman has emphasized in her recent influential study on this topic.⁷ Even the field of medicine was characterized by a dualistic approach, with physicians drawing both from their own medical science and from religious rituals and faiths.⁸

Although Max Weber had famously argued in a 1918 lecture that the modern world since ca. 1800 has experienced a profound disenchantment, implying a loss of religion as the result of the rise of rationality and critical thinking, recent scholarship has actually observed a much more complex situation within the modern world experiencing a form of re-enchantment.⁹ At the same time, we have also dis-

ob der Tauber, XI (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2020), the phenomena of ordeals directed even against animals, which were, however, only possible because of the strong religious sense dominating that period.

7 Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). See also the contributions to the exhibition catalog, *Secular Sacred: 11th–16th Century Works from the Boston Public Library and the Museum of Fine Arts*, ed. Nancy Netzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Very insightful proves to be also Jane L. Mecham, “Cooperative Piety Among Monastic and Secular Women in Late Medieval Germany,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 88 (2008): 581–611; see also Gabriele Signori, “Wanderer zwischen den ‘Welten’: Besucher, Briefe, Vermächtnisse und Geschenke als Kommunikationsmedien im Austausch zwischen Kloster und Welt,” *Krone und Schleier: Kunst aus mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern, Ruhrlandmuseum, die frühen Klöster und Stifte 500–1200. Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, die Zeit der Orden 1200–1500*, ed. Jutta Frings and Jan Gerchow (Munich: Hirmer, 2005), 130–41.

8 *The Sacred and the Secular in Medieval Healing: Sites, Objects, and Texts*, ed. Barbara S. Bowers and Linda Migl Keyser. AVISTA Studies in the History of Medieval Technology, Science, and Art, 10 (London: Routledge, 2016); see also the contributions to *Paracelsus im Kontext der Wissenschaften seiner Zeit: Kultur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Annäherungen*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien, 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); *Religion und Gesundheit in der Frühen Neuzeit: Der heilkundliche Diskurs im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien, 3 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011); and to *Gutes Leben und guter Tod von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein philosophisch-ethischer Diskurs über die Jahrhunderte hinweg*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien, 4 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012).

9 Jason Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Allison P. Coudert, “Rethinking Max Weber’s Theory of Disenchantment,” *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Al-

covered many features of rationality already at work in the Middle Ages, many of them contributing to the phenomenon we call “The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.”¹⁰

In order to probe this highly contested issue further, this study will examine not the overarching concept of sacrality as such as it determined especially the early Middle Ages when religious literature was the norm, but the presence of the sacred in the profane/secular and vice versa in some high and late medieval German narratives.¹¹ We could easily reach similar observations if we turned our attention to contemporary French, English, Italian, or Spanish literature. Critics might argue, of course, that this historical perspective would not challenge the Weberian notion at all, and they would be somewhat right in that regard. However, the purpose here is to examine the intertwining of those two dimensions as a relevant factor in the literary discourse throughout time. To what extent this might have direct implications for us today, however, can only be surmised and is beyond the scope of this study. We will observe, however, the huge impact of the sacred in medieval literature at large, whether composed for a worldly or a clerical audience. And, at the same time, as recent scholarship has also demonstrated, the profane permeated similarly the sacred dimension during the pre-modern world quite extensively.¹²

brecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 705–39. For Weber’s text, see <https://www.textlog.de/2321.html> (last accessed on May 22, 2023).

10 *Renaissance Before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Warren Treadgold (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984); Robert N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); David L. D’Avray, *Medieval Religious Rationalities: A Weberian Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Reason and Rationality*, ed. Maria Cristina Amoretti and Nicola Vassallo. *Philosophische Analyse / Philosophical Analysis*, 48 (Frankfurt a.M.: Ontos-Verlag, 2012); Alex J. Novikoff, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance: A Reader*. Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures, XIX (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2017); Robert J. Dobie, *Thinking Through Revelation: Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

11 See, for instance, Hans-Werner Goetz, *Gott und die Welt: Religiöse Vorstellungen des frühen und hohen Mittelalters*, 2 vols. *Orbis mediaevalis. Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters*, 13.2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2012).

12 *Sakralität und Sakralisierung: Perspektiven des Heiligen*, ed. Andrea Beck and Andreas Berndt. *Beiträge zur Hagiographie*, 13 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013). See also *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Susan M. Felch. *Cambridge Companions to Literature and Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, ed. and intro. Daniel E. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (1987; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); for modern perspectives, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. *Cultural Memory in the Present*

Medieval Literature and Religion

Nibelungenlied

Even though medieval literature was truly dominated by religious texts, which comes as no surprise considering that a majority of poets and scribes were trained clerics, or were sponsored by Church-associated patrons, we have available also a large number of secular texts. Those, however, as any close analysis can demonstrate, also contain numerous references to the Bible and the basic teachings by the Church, and are informed by the spiritual values advocated and preached by the religious authorities. There are curious situations, however, if we consider, for instance, the anonymous *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), certainly commissioned by the Passau Bishop Wolfger von Erla, who obviously demonstrated a great interest in this secular heroic epic, though probably for quite different reasons than we would assume today.¹³ The outcome of this grand narrative is, after all, catastrophic, and the audience could clearly recognize the reasons for the collapse of society where the Church did not guide people. Perhaps, we may assume that the negative conclusion served the episcopal audience to express their deep concerns about a world void of spiritual ideals and to present stark words of warning about the dangerous principles of a heroic society.

There are a few references to the Church, such as when the Queens Kriemhild and Brunhild squabble over their primacy in the procession into the building (14th Aventure, or stanzas 811–73), or when Hagen attempts to drown the chaplain when the Burgundians cross the Danube (25th Aventure, or stanzas 1571–77), but otherwise, spirituality or the sacred does not seem to matter. Nevertheless, the horrendous outcome speaks a clear language, warning the audience about

(Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Manuel Vasquez, “Studying Religion in Motion: A Networks Approach,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20 (2008): 151–84. Cf. also the contributions to *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400–1550): Reading, Worshipping, and Connecting Through the Continuum of Sacred and Secular*, ed. Suzan Folkerts. New Communities of Interpretation, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

13 Wolfger von Erla: *Bischof von Passau (1191–1204) und Patriarch von Aquileja (1204–1218) als Kirchenfürst und Literaturmäzen*, ed. Egon Boshof and Fritz Peter Knapp. Germanische Bibliothek, 3. Reihe: Untersuchungen, 20 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1994); Joachim Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen der ‘Nibelungenklage’: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte und Textkritik der höfischen Epik im 13. Jahrhundert*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 8 (242) (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996); Albrecht Classen, “Nibelungenlied and Christianity,” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (EBR)*, ed. Constance M. Furey, Joel LeMon, Brian Matz, Thomas Römer, et al. (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming).

the dire consequences of a heroic culture void of Christian principles. Communication hardly ever functions properly; there is no compassion, no cooperation, no commitment, and no real sense of community, apart from the close-knit group of Burgundians. Little wonder, hence, that at the conclusion all major figures have died as the result of overarching hatred with which Kriemhild pursues her goal to avenge the murder of her husband Siegfried at the hand of Hagen, but indirectly also of her royal brothers.¹⁴

Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach

Hartmann von Aue's courtly romances *Erec* and *Iwein*, similar to their French sources by Chrétien de Troyes, are mostly worldly in their orientation, but at closer analysis we can still discover religious allusions and undertones, with the respective protagonist operating, so to speak, as a new messiah who has to sacrifice himself for the well-being of this world. Despite the secular appearance of both romances, we are repeatedly reminded of the great importance of the Christian faith, so when people bless Erec: "alsô daz si einen gemeinen segên / mit triuwen tâtên über den degen, / daz sîner êren wîelte / und im die sêle behielte" (9986–89; All of them blessed in full loyalty the hero that he may preserve his honor and protect his soul).¹⁵ Undoubtedly, Hartmann was a deeply religious person, as particularly his legendary tale *Gregorius* (ca. 1190) indicates, which was one of a pan-European narrative, all of the different versions appealing to the Christian community to believe in a merciful Father God who would forgive even the worst sins if the sinner would repent honestly and fully.¹⁶

14 One of the best psychological analyses of this heroic poem, mostly convincing in the argumentation, was presented by Irmgard Gephart, *Der Zorn der Nibelungen: Rivalität und Rache im "Nibelungenlied"* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005). The issue of religion, however, is also not raised here.

15 Hartmann von Aue, *Erec: Mittelhochdeutscher Text und Übertragung* by Thomas Cramer (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2003). See also *The Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue*, trans. with commentary by Frank Tobin, Kim Vivian, and Richard H. Lawson. Arthurian Romances, Tales, and Lyric Poetry (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

16 Volker Mertens, *Gregorius Eremita: eine Lebensform des Adels bei Hartmann von Aue in ihrer Problematik und ihrer Wandlung in der Rezeption*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 78 (Zürich and Munich: Artemis, 1978); David Duckworth, *Gregorius: A Medieval Man's Discovery of His True Self*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 422 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985); Brian Murdoch, *Gregorius: An Incestuous Saint in Medieval Europe and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Even more intriguing in this regard proves to be Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (ca. 1205) in which the Arthurian and the Grail world interweave with each other, that is, where the dimension of knighthood merges with the dimension of the spirituality of the Grail. Although young Parzival roams the world in vain for a very long time in his search for Castle Munsalvæsche, the ultimate predetermined destiny for him, that is, to redeem the ailing King Anfortas and thus also himself, he is finally allowed to return and to ask the crucial question, which returns health and happiness to the community and thus to the world at large.¹⁷ This critical action carries deep religious meaning, though Wolfram does not embed it within the traditional clerical or theological context.

Walther von der Vogelweide

In the famous poem "Under the linden" by Walther von der Vogelweide (ca. 1190/1200) we observe particularly the complexity of love embedded both in a secular and a spiritual context, with the two dimensions corresponding with each other intimately. But we must read the text carefully to recognize the sacred aspect within its highly secular and erotic context. This poem, generally regarded as one of the best love poems in the history of German literature, stands out so much because a female voice relates her adventure meeting her lover in a meadow at the edge of a forest, specifically under a linden tree, a tree deeply symbolic of love according to the Ovidian tradition. The poet maintains the pretense of the female singer who allegedly reflects on her intimate experience and now voices deep embarrassment if people would find out about it.

Only a nightingale is the lovers' witness, but the singer hopes that it will keep it a secret what she actually reveals in the song, and this to a courtly audience, namely their happy love making. Her boyfriend had prepared a bed out of grass and flowers, and all those who later passed by that site could recognize from the imprint of her body on the rose petals where she had rested. This realization made everyone chuckle happily, expressing their approval of this love affair, which was obviously outside of the bonds of marriage and did not meet the parents' ap-

17 Wolfram von Eschenbach: *Parzival*. Student edition. Middle High German text based on the sixth edition by Karl Lachmann, transl. Peter Knecht, introduction to the text by Bernd Schirok (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998); for general introductions, see Heiko Hartmann, *Einführung in das Werk Wolframs von Eschenbach*. Einführung Germanistik (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2015) cf., also the contributions to *A Companion to Wolfram's Parzival*, ed. Will Hasty. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1999).

proval, judging from the secrecy surrounding this scenery. The song continues to charm us because of the happy tone, the woman's delight about her lover's efforts to welcome her under the linden tree, and the singer's playful pretense of shame and embarrassment if anyone would find out what had happened at that *locus amoenus*.¹⁸

Walther successfully assumed the voice of a female singer and projected strong erotic feelings, which all amounts to an early form of a utopian love song where complete happiness was achieved, but only temporarily. Most significantly, we as listeners or readers become the real witnesses, or rather voyeurs, as much as the woman's voice endeavors to keep her personal encounter a secret: "niemer niemen / bevinde daz, wan er und ich" (IV, 5–6; may never anyone find out, except him and me).¹⁹

As much as this famous woman's song appears to be entirely secular, there is also a fleeting but important reference to the Virgin Mary, situated between two verses addressing the fact that the lover had welcomed her (II, 4) and that she will be happy about it in eternity (II, 6). The narrator only injects the phrase: "hêre frowe" (II, 5), which has commonly been translated as 'heavenly lady' or 'queen,' meaning specifically 'ruling lady.'

Why would this young woman suddenly appeal to the Virgin Mary within the context of her reflections on how she met her lover in a pastoral setting (*locus amoenus*)? It would not make sense to consider the phrase as a reference to a noble lady, the mistress of the house, her mother, etc. Instead, the religious conno-

18 Walther von der Vogelweide, *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*. 15th, revised and expanded edition of the edition by Karl Lachmann, ed. by Thomas Bein, on the basis of the 14th ed. prepared by Christoph Cormeau (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), no. 16, or Lachmann 39, 11, 126–27. There are numerous English translations available, also online, such as at <https://www.planck.com/rhymedtranslations/vogelweidelinden.htm>; or at: <http://www.mytwostotinki.com/?p=1928> (both last accessed on May 20, 2023).

19 Heike Sievert, *Studien zur Liebeslyrik Walthers von der Vogelweide*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 506 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1990), 93–106; see also the contributions to *Walther von der Vogelweide: Hamburger Kolloquium 1988 zum 65. Geburtstag von Karl-Heinz Borck*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller and Franz Josef Worstbrock (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1989); Otfried Ehrismann, *Einführung in das Werk Walthers von der Vogelweide*. Einführungen Germanistik (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 111–13; Hermann Reichert, *Walther von der Vogelweide für Anfänger*. 3rd, completely rev. and expanded ed. (1992; Vienna: facultas.wuv, 2009), 103–09. Cf. also A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). As to 'women's songs' in medieval German love *Minnesang*, see *Frauenlieder des Mittelalters*, trans. and ed. Ingrid Kasten (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1990); see also the contributions to *Medieval Woman's Song: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, ed. Anne L. Klinck and Ann Marie Rasmussen. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

tation seems to be the most reasonable interpretation, underscoring the young woman's purity and firm belief that her meeting with her "friedel" was fully approved by the highest authority, the mother of God.²⁰

This mysterious injection proves to be so important for our investigation because Walther thereby implied that this utopian projection of love would be possible only with the full support of the Mother of God, which interlaces the secular-erotic with the spiritual-sacred. Significantly, the young woman expresses this sense of the religious ideal within the context of physical love when she formulates: "daz ich bin sælic iemer mê" (II, 6; may I be blessed/blissful forever). And at the end, the female voice also appeals to God to help her to keep her experience a secret; otherwise, she would feel deeply ashamed (IV, 3). Courtly love thus assumes not only a highly erotic character, but it is also associated with the divine, especially when there is a sense of fulfillment in love.

Gottfried von Strassburg

These preliminary observations find additional affirmation in *Tristan and Isolde* by Gottfried von Strassburg (ca. 1210), where we encounter yet another attempt to identify the highest form of human love as a utopia and as a quasi-religious experience.²¹ Throughout the romance, and especially in the theoretical parts, the poet makes explicit references to the divine and interlinks the elements of love, beauty, and the sacred in a most intriguing fashion (4896–4907).²² Drawing on the narrative strategy of ekphrasis, Gottfried resists the temptation to compare Tristan's armor with those produced by Greek mythological figures, and instead he appeals to God that his poem will be received in the higher spheres of the heavens: "oben in ir himelkoeren" (4906; up there in the heavenly choirs). Of course, Gottfried's *Tristan* is certainly secular in its orientation, elaborating in a complex manner on the genesis and evolution of the love bonding these two protagonists togeth-

20 Walther von der Vogelweide, *Werke: Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 2: *Liedlyrik. Mittelhochdeutsch/ Neuhochdeutsche*, ed., trans., and commentary by Günther Schweikle (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1998), 650, offers a range of possible meanings, but does not even discuss the religious dimension. In the translation, however, we observe the opposite approach: "Heilige (Jung-)Frau" (229).

21 Tomas Tomasek, *Die Utopie im 'Tristan' Gotfrids von Straßburg*. Hermaea. Germanistische Forschungen, Neue Reihe, 49 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1985).

22 Herbert Kolb, "Der ware Elicon': Zu Gottfrieds *Tristan* vv. 4862–4907," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 41 (1967): 1–26; Alois Wolf, "diu wære wirtinne – der wære Elicon: Zur Frage des typologischen Denkens in volkssprachlicher Dichtung des Hochmittelalters," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 6 (1974): 93–131; Tobias Bulang, *guldine linge: Fünf Essays zu Gottfrieds Tristan* (Wiesbaden: Richert Verlag, 2021), 12–13.

er until the rest of their lives, but the ideals behind this love and the value of the protagonists' characters prove to be tantamount to Christian concepts, closely associating Tristan with Christ Himself.²³

There are many references to the New Testament, and many possible comparisons between Tristan and the Messiah. But the most intriguing example of the intersection between the sacred and the profane proves to be the famous love cave to which Tristan and Isolde retire when they are expelled from the court. The symbolism of that cave, often discussed by scholarship, is enormous, and there are countless allusions to antiquity, to giants as the first builders, to love itself, and sexuality, and also to Gothic architecture. But, what is most important for our context, the cave itself appears to be a kind of church, with an altar in its middle, and a utopian sense of that space most medieval listeners/readers would have recognized immediately.

Although the cave is called “la fossiure a la gent amant” (16700, the cave of gentle love), it immediately evokes the atmosphere of a sacred space, being entirely round, white, with an elegant vault decorated with sophisticated wrought iron and gemstones. The floor is smooth, clean, and valuable, made out of green marble, in the middle of which there is a bed out of crystal, with letters embossed on all sides identifying it as dedicated to the “gottinne Minne” (1623; goddess Minne [courtly love]). Significantly, at the top there are three windows, which evoke the holy Trinity, and outside of the cave there are three linden trees, famously symbolic as trees of love (16741). Bird song on the outside, most sweet to listen to, surrounds the cave, so beauty, happiness, and spirituality merge on the inside and the outside within one framework which underscores Gottfried's profound effort to characterize the love between Tristan and Isolde in a syncretic fashion as most erotic and most sacred at the same time. Fittingly for this utopian space, the two lovers are in no need of food or drink and can nourish themselves from their mutual love (16820).

Subsequently, the narrator provides also an allegorical reading of all elements of and in the cave, which points toward the fundamental courtly values and courtly love (16929–984). In particular, we are informed that the three windows signify goodness, humbleness, and good manners (17063–066), which might signal a non-sacred reading. In essence, however, behind those worldly values we can easily de-

²³ Gottfried von Strassburg: *Tristan*. Ed., trans. into New High German, with a commentary, and an epilogue by Rüdiger Krohn (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1980); Tomas Tomasek, *Gottfried von Straßburg* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2007). Research on Gottfried is expansive. See now the excellent translation: Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan and Isolde*, with Ulrich von Türlheim's *Continuation*, ed. and trans., with an intro., by William T. Whobrey (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2020).

tect religious ideals as well, especially when we hear that the cave is located in extreme wilderness and thus hardly accessible to any normal person. Has Gottfried thus depicted here paradise on earth?

The narrator claims to have visited the cave himself on several occasions, to have danced on the green marble floor, and to have gazed into the mysteriously beautiful ceiling (17110–136), which reminds us once again of the design of a Gothic cathedral. Gottfried is telling us a deeply symbolic story, a story of two lovers who will never be able to separate, and yet it is also a story of the human relationship with God, hidden behind the courtly account.²⁴ But the poet assumed a highly idiosyncratic approach to the divine, projecting God as Tristan's protector during his youth when the Norwegian merchants have to drop him off at the Cornish coast if they want to survive the tempest. Much later, when Isolde is already under grave suspicion of having committed adultery with Tristan, she undergoes the ordeal and triumphs, which makes the narrator comment that Christ would have to be identified as a wind-swept sleeve who can be manipulated in an outrageous fashion by Isolde when she swears a formally correct oath, but lies callously to protect herself from the charges of adultery she is certainly guilty of during the ordeal scene.

As Nigel Harris correctly formulates: "the image of God he presents is a multifaceted, inconsistent, elusive, and at times disturbingly provocative one."²⁵ We could go so far, as Harris suggests, to identify the love between Tristan and Isolde with God's love for the human soul (125), or to correlate their love experience with mysticism (125–28), but Gottfried's literary brilliance goes far beyond such simple binary oppositions. This romance is characterized both by ambivalence and intrigue, and we would never reach full conclusions if we tried to pin the poet down as a secular or as a sacred poet.²⁶ Particularly for that reason, Gottfried's *Tristan* pro-

24 Alois Wolf, *Gottfried von Strassburg und die Mythe von Tristan und Isolde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 191–236; Hugo Bekker, *Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan: Journey Through the Realm of Eros*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1987), 244–52. See now also Bulang, *guldine linge* (see note 22), ch. 5, 85–104, referring to the highly symbolic lock and bolt in the door to the cave: "Mit den gleichzeitigen Anleihen an der Mariologie vollzieht sich hier auch im Detail eine Sakralisierung der Liebe, welche den Text durchgehend, die Minnegrotten-Allegorese aber in besonderer Weise prägt" (Through the concomitant borrowing from Mariology a sacralization of love takes place also in detail, which imprints the entire text, and the love cave allegoresis in particular).

25 Nigel Harris, "God, Religion, and Ambiguity in *Tristan*," *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's "Tristan"*, ed. Will Hasty. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 113–36; here 125.

26 Irene Lanz-Hubmann, "Nein unde jâ": *Mehrdeutigkeit im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg: Ein Rezipientenproblem*. Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700, vol. 5 (Bern, Frankfurt a.M., et al.: Peter Lang, 1989), 48–52.

vides some of the most powerful examples for the typically medieval intersectionality of the sacred with the profane, of the religious with the secular, all and everything contained in the intriguing and ineffable experience of love.²⁷

Books of Hours

These literary-historical and religious-philosophical observations can finally be summed up in a few comments on the world of visual objects because most of medieval art was commissioned by and for members of the Church, whether we think of buildings or stained-glass windows, of sculptures or altar pieces.²⁸ We would have to wait until the late Middle Ages to observe secular patrons asking for secular art objects. But the example of the *Books of Hours*, a very popular genre especially among noble ladies, underscores, once again, the intimate correlation between secular and religious also in illustrated manuscript production. As much as the purpose of a *Book of Hour* was to serve the owner/user as a literary, artistic, and spiritual medium for private devotion and liturgical practices, it was always also a highly representative work of book art much sought after and collected by the mighty and wealthy.²⁹ While many times the central miniature consists of a religious theme, marginal drawings commonly reflect on nature in a myriad of ways, offering simply aesthetic delight for the spectator. We might be able to go so far as to identify much of pre-modern art and music as the result of an amalgamation process involving the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the worldly.

27 Albrecht Classen, "Worldly Love – Spiritual Love. The Dialectics of Courtly Love in the Middle Ages," *Studies in Spirituality* 11 (2001): 166–86.

28 *Architekturen und Artefakte: zur Materialität des Religiösen*, ed. Uta Karstein and Thomas Schmidt-Lux (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017).

29 Albrecht Classen, "The Book of Hours in the Middle Ages," *Futhark: Revista de Investigación y Cultura* 2 (2007): 111–29; idem, "Die Glorie der mittelalterlichen Buchproduktion. Vom Manuskript zur Inkunabel, aus literatur- und kulturhistorischer Sicht. Wie dunkel war also das Mittelalter?," *Mediaevistik* 33 (2020, appeared in 2021): 71–87. See also Maurits Smeyers, *Flemish Miniatures From the 8th to the Mid-16th Century: The Medieval World on Parchment* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Roger S. Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*. 2nd ed. (New York: Braziller, 1988); and the contributions to *Books of Hours Reconsidered*, ed. Sandra Hindman and James H. Marrow. *Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History*, 72 (London and Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2013).

Literary Representatives from the Late Middle Ages

a. Ulrich Bonerius

The most interesting case involves the Bernese Dominican priest and author, Ulrich Bonerius, who composed a major collection of fables under the title *Der Edelstein* (The Gemstone) and published it around 1350. While Bonerius (also known as Boner in German) drew extensively from the classical tradition (Aesop, Avianus, Romulus, etc.) and created a work quite parallel to the *Fables* by the Anglo-Norman poet Marie de France,³⁰ he still operated quite independently and did not only adapt the various sources for his own purposes, but created a number of unique narratives, some of which we would not even call ‘fables’ in the narrow sense of the word.³¹ Here we face a man of the Church, a Dominican friar, and yet, as we will see, Bonerius explored many different secular topics in human life and combined freely social, moral, economic, ethical, and political issues in his fables and other texts.

Surprisingly, he refrained from addressing religious issues specifically, and yet obviously pursued concerns close to the heart of any preacher or other cleric. In contrast to the previous examples, our discussion of Bonerius’s fables will not focus on the question of to what extent the poet combined religious with secular issues. Instead, our analysis will address the spiritual dimension behind many of the universal messages formulated by this friar, which underscores, once again, but now within a late medieval context, the artificiality of trying to separate the sacred from the secular in pre-modern literature.

As to be expected for fable literature, many of the one hundred texts engage with universal concerns in all of human life, many of which pertain to the social interactions among people, such as friendships, thievery, marriage, councilors, corruption, children, disagreements, wisdom, old age, vanity, arrogance, greed, and so forth. But there is a certain thematic framework, if we consider the first and the

³⁰ Albrecht Classen, “Two Great Fable Authors from the Middle Ages – Marie de France and Ulrich Bonerius. New Perspectives on the Reception of an Ancient Literary Genre,” *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series, 47 (2022): 23–48.

³¹ Ulrich Boner, *Der Edelstein: Eine mittelalterliche Fabelsammlung. Zweisprachige Ausgabe Mittelhochdeutsch – Neuhochdeutsch*. Ed., trans., and with commentary by Manfred Stange (Überstadt-Weiher, Heidelberg, et al.: verlag regionalkultur, 2016); for the English translation, see Albrecht Classen, trans., *The Fables of Ulrich Bonerius (ca. 1350): Masterwork of Late Medieval Didactic Literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020); for a compact introduction and discussion, see also Albrecht Classen, “Ulrich Bonerius,” *Literary Encyclopedia*, Jan. 2021, online (for a charge) at: <https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=14687> (last accessed on May 21, 2023).

last fable separately from the rest. In the first, relating the story of a rooster which disregards a gemstone because it is not food matter, we are confronted with the common situation that people tend to ignore inner truth, spiritual values, and wisdom because they cannot profit from those aspects in their ordinary lives. The poet identifies those who, like the rooster, dismiss the jewel because they cannot recognize its true properties, with them being fools, that is, individuals who are as ignorant and blind as animals, Truth rests behind the exterior and requires intensive study before wisdom can be reached.

In the last story, we face seemingly a worldly account of a king who would have nearly died from an assassination attack. His enemies had paid off the king's barber, who was about to use his personal opportunity when shaving the king to cut off his head. However, the king had purchased a statement of wisdom from a deeply learned cleric who had acted like a merchant on a market and had offered his insights to any customer willing to pay for his insights – perhaps an indirect allusion to Bonerius himself as the public preacher. Although the royal servants regarded the cleric's price as much too high, they have to accept the deal because the king had ordered them to do so. The cleric, however, had written down nothing but: “du solt daz end an sehen / dīnr werken, und waz dir beschehen / mag dar umbe kümftckliche” (35–37; consider the results of your deeds and what will happen with you in the future).

Despite the seeming simplicity of those words, the king is greatly pleased with the message and does not mind the high price he had to pay for them. Indeed, he has those words inscribed on the door to his private chamber, which later makes the barber pause and then get deeply frightened. His curious behavior makes him look suspicious, he is then apprehended and beaten until he reveals his true intentions. Thus, the king learns how much he actually owes his life to those spiritual words, without which the barber would not have stopped the assassination attempt and would not have reacted so vehemently out of fear for his own soul. We are not told what then happened with the barber, whether he was executed or imprisoned. The poet only comments that the king survived and forced his enemies to leave the court.

Most importantly, Bonerius always makes a great effort to comment on his narrative in a lengthy epimythium, as he does here as well. According to his opinion, the person who can foresee the outcome of his own works would be a wise person (89–90), and those who would be able to consider the future developments or the consequences of his own deeds would not have to repent his past actions: “guot ende guoten namen gît” (94; a good ending provides a good reputation). Interestingly, the poet does not argue narrowly from a theological point of view, though he also addresses sinfulness, emphasizing that, at least indirectly speaking, timely repentance would avoid the evil consequences of sinful acts in one's life:

“daz ende wol vertriben kan / die sünde, wer ez sihet an” (95–96; the end can well chase away the sin if you can consider it in time).

The poet deliberately avoids concluding with purely religious teachings and resorts, hence, to a worldly metaphor which most people would understand easily. Comparing life with a sea voyage, he underscores that a good ship captain would know how to steer his vessel well and to guide it successfully into the safe harbor: “und richt daz schif, daz ez wol gât” (100; and commands the ship in such a way that it sails well).³² Bonerius argues certainly from a religious perspective, but he also refrains from the usual sermon-like discourse, thereby helping his audience to follow quite easily his teachings, which are directed both at the sacred and the worldly aspects of human life.

Of course, as is so often the case in medieval literature, Bonerius also offers a prologue in which he openly reflects his religious devotion, addressing God, asking for His support in his endeavor to compose these fables: “got, hêre über al der engel schar, / wie ist sô grundelos gar / daz mer dîn almechtigkeit!” (5–7; God, Lord over all the angelic throngs, the ocean of your almighty nature is so fathomless). Curiously, however, as much as the poet has the afterlife in mind when telling his fables, he emphasizes primarily the values of virtues and honor (26), i.e., worldly criteria within the social context. But subsequently Bonerius widens the perspective and outlines the ultimate purpose of his verse narratives through which the individual can learn how to strengthen his virtues *and* his blessedness in spiritual terms (33). Considering the nature and purpose of his fables, the poet outlines that they would contribute to the growth in honor (34), to the taming of undisciplined men (35) and hysterical women (36), and that they will serve to make all people, young and old, gain in public stature, like fresh green leaves do to a tree in the forest (38).

32 Hans Biedermann, *Knaurs Lexikon der Symbole* (Munich: Droemersch Verlaganstalt, 1989), 381–82; for post-medieval perspectives, see, for instance, Philip Edwards, *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton*. Liverpool English Texts and Studies, 30 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997); Albrecht Classen, “Sea Voyages in Medieval Romances as Symbolic Trails Through Life: Existential Experiences and Female Suffering on the Water,” *Critical Literary Studies: Academic Journal* (University of Kurdistan) 2.2. Series 4 (2020): 27–46; http://cls.uok.ac.ir/article_61567.html; or: DOI 10.34785/J014.2020.367 (last accessed on May 5, 2023). Famously, the French poet Christine de Pizan (ca. 1364–ca. 1431) developed this metaphor of the ship captain in greater detail to reflect on the loss of her husband and on her own development as an independent person in her *Livre de la mutation de fortune* (ca. 1403); see *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*. New Translations, Criticism, trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1997), 104–08.

We can certainly recognize, interwoven in these hundred fables, a strong interest in addressing the Seven Deadly Sins,³³ such as the treatment of pride (nos. 46 or 51), anger/wrath (no. 60), greed (no. 80), or envy (no. 88), that is, advice formulated by a preacher in his sermon. Overall, however, Bonerius is much more interested in engaging with a wide range of human shortcomings and failures, warning about false friends (no. 73), the danger of mocking (no. 75), contempt of others who seem to be inferior (no. 81), arrogance (no. 86), excessive frugality (no. 89), or simply stupidity (no. 92). Nevertheless, all that advice is embedded in global reflections on poor behavior by animals who represent, of course, human beings in their shortcomings.

As we learn from his epilogue, where he still refrains from a direct religious interpretation, studying his fables would ultimately contribute to improving people's lives: "daz wiser werd des menschen muot" (8; so that people grow in their wisdom). Although Bonerius admits that he did not resort to a sophisticated language and expressed himself in a rather simplistic fashion, he hopes that his fables will shine forth through their "kluger sinnen hort" (14; treasure of smartness). Plain narratives, though little appreciated at his time, as he laments explicitly, can carry deep meaning and reach out to people. By the same token, those who resort to highly sophisticated language in their sermons, would often not even understand their own words and thus fail in all their efforts to teach their audiences (25–26).

We sense here a subtle degree of anti-clericalism, especially because Bonerius intends to be a teacher of the ordinary people and hence knows that he can reach them only if he formulates his ideas in plain terms.³⁴ His fable "Von einem tôrecht-en schulpfaffen" (no. 99) underscores this aspect most vividly as the narrator there points out that an ignoramus will never learn anything, whether he would attend the university of Paris or not (67–70). As we are told: "ist er ein esel und ein gouch, / daz selb ist er ze Parîs ouch" (71–72; if he is an ass and a fool, he will be the same

33 Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature*. Studies in Language and Literature (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1952); *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. Richard Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2012); *The Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. Kevin M. Clarke. Sayings of the Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018); for an excellent overview, with helpful images and bibliography, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_deadly_sins (last accessed on Oct. 21, 2021).

34 *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, LI (Leiden, New York, and Cologone: E. J. Brill, 1993).

in Paris as well). This does not mean, however, that the poet would not have the afterlife in mind or would have been focused on worldly affairs only.

As the brilliant story “Von einem bischofe und einem erzpriester” (no. 98) illustrates, Bonerius felt deeply concerned both with worldly and religious affairs and recognized clearly the ills within his own Church. A highly reputed bishop appoints the son of one of his cousins to the position of archpriest – basically the bishop’s representative, the most senior of priests within a diocese – although he is certainly too young for that task and lacks in expertise and maturity. The young man had applied for that office and received it easily, which the narrator views with great concern. Soon thereafter, a cook brings a basket full of delightful pears, and the bishop is looking for someone who could take care of them responsibly. The young man offers himself, but the bishop rejects this because he is afraid that the pears would be eaten up quickly without himself having a chance to enjoy them (31–32).

When a wise man observes this scene, he breaks out in loud lamentations that the bishop had dared to entrust so many souls to the cousin’s son without any care about the appropriateness of this appointment, when he did not trust the young man even to guard pears: “dem ir die biren hânt verseit / ze hüeten, der sol phlegger wesen / der sêlen? wie mag dâ genesen / daz schâf, sô wolf ze hirte wirt?” (44–46; he to whom you do not want to entrust your pears is to be the shepherd of the souls? How can then the sheep preserve its life when the wolf is made to the shepherd?).

The message contained here is loud and clear, but it can be applied both to the spiritual and to the worldly dimension since the constellation would work well both within the Church and in any political structure. Appointing the young man as archpriest was tantamount to corruption, and the poet strongly warns against the danger that children or youth receive highly responsible positions without commanding the necessary intelligence, maturity, and wisdom. In the epimythium, Bonerius formulates his concerns about those who abuse their power in general terms (sheep, shearing, victimization) and about those who are entrusted countless souls and ought to lead them out of sinfulness toward goodness, that is, toward salvation. The young appointees, however, do not care about their responsibilities: “si enruochet, war diu sêle vart” (66; they do not care where the soul ends up). Even though he still uses the epithet “wise” (67; wise) for the bishop, the criticism against his wrong decision is unmistakable and sharp. God would ‘reward’ those who act so badly in the proper fashion. Bonerius takes a strong swipe against the clerical authorities and warns the audience about trusting them too much when they abuse their power and endanger the well-being of the members of their parish or diocese.

What matters for us, however, is not so much the anti-clerical thrust of this narrative, but the intriguing combination of worldly and sacred values and concerns in the larger context of the poet's narratives. The situation at the bishop's court illustrates, of course, the conditions within the Church, but the nepotism described here would be a common one within worldly society as well. Much depends on the individual text we might consult in our context since some address universal concerns, such as freedom and slavery (nos. 24, 25, 59), whereas others aim at the analysis of both worldly and spiritual values, such as "Von der sunnen und dem winde" (no. 66) where the wind and the sun compete against each other over the question who has more power. Since they disagree, they turn to a judge, Jupiter, who makes each of them prove his full force with the help of an innocent victim, a pilgrim. The outcome is easy to summarize since the wind only makes the pilgrim hold tight to his coat, whereas the sun, simply using its warmth, can easily coax him to take it off and to relax, basking in the pleasant sunshine.

As Jupiter then concludes, the sun's soft approach ("senftekeit," 47) carried the victory over the wind's "hertekeit" (48, harshness) and "unvuoge" (49; wild force). The last term gains the most attention since the poet underscores here the danger in all of human behavior, that is, lack of self-control, discipline, and good manners. By contrast, "mit senftekeit und mit gedult / mag man gesigen unverschult. / wer gestân wil und genesen, / der sol nicht ungevüege wesen" (57–60; with the help of softness and patience you can easily win. He who wants to hold his position and thrive, ought not to demonstrate rough behavior).

Undoubtedly, in most of his fables, Bonerius addresses universal human concerns and everyday situations relevant for his ordinary audience, probably his Bernese parishioners. The dominant issue normally appears to be the proper social interaction among people, predicated on ethics, morality, wisdom, rationality, and goodness, although in most cases those very values are absent.³⁵ Bonerius, like all other fable poets, intends to appeal to people, to point out their shortcomings and failures, and to provide didactic examples of how to improve one's situation in life by way of learning from the situations presented here.

Significantly, much more than other fable authors, such as Marie de France or The Stricker, however, Bonerius frames his collection with a pro- and epilogue in which he outlines not only his general moral, ethical, and social concerns, but also his religious motivation. There is, of course, ultimately no real surprise as to the spiritual dimension appearing behind the scene, so to speak, because Bonerius was a Dominican preacher. At the same time, it is worth noting the extent to

35 Albrecht Classen, "Einblicke in den Alltag des 14. Jahrhunderts. Die Fabeln des Ulrich Bonerius: *Der Edelstein*," *Etudes Germaniques* 75.4 (2020): 593–615.

which he actually embedded his worldly concerns within a larger spiritual concern. His fables superficially hardly address the sacred dimension, but any close reading easily reveals how much it is present, after all.³⁶

b. Heinrich Kaufringer

When we turn to the verse narratives by Heinrich Kaufringer (ca. 1400), we move to a slightly different genre determined by a higher emphasis on entertainment, though the didactic element is still clearly visible. Kaufringer, whose identity is not fully determined – the sources also refer to a second person with that name; probably his son – deserves high respect for his large number of meaningful and often rather surprising, innovative, and even stupefying narratives.³⁷ Similar as in Bonerius's case, this Swabian poet offers many different perspectives on life, combining the worldly with the sacred with often changing approaches. I will first take a close look at the entire œuvre in its various composites, where we observe an intriguing interchange between the sacred and the secular, and then take into consideration a few specific examples to illustrate Kaufringer's particular approach to the divine within a worldly context.

³⁶ See also Klaus Grubmüller, *Meister Esopus: Untersuchung zur Geschichte und Funktion der Fabel im Mittelalter*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 56 (Zürich and Munich: Artemis, 1977), 297–374; A. E. Wright, 'Hie lert uns der meister': *Latin Commentary and the German Fable 1350–1500*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 218 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 107–44; cf. also the contributions to *Der Basler Edelstein: Ulrich Boners Fabelsammlung in der Handschrift der Universitätsbibliothek Basler AN III 17*, ed. Kristina Domanski, Charlotte Gutscher-Schmid, and Cordula Kropik. Publikationen der Universitätsbibliothek Basel, 48 (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2021). The emphasis, however, here rests on the Basel manuscript, and not so much on the interpretation of the narratives.

³⁷ Heinrich Kaufringer, *Werke*, ed. Paul Sappeler. Vol. I: *Texte* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1972); see also my English translation, Albrecht Classen, *Love, Life, and Lust in Heinrich Kaufringer's Verse Narratives*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 467. MRTS Texts for Teaching, 9. 2nd expanded and improved ed. (2014; Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2019). For a comprehensive, though by now a bit outdated, analysis, see Marga Stede, *Schreiben in der Krise: Die Texte des Heinrich Kaufringers*. Literatur – Imagination – Realität. Anglistische, germanistische, romanistische Studien, 5 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1993), who emphasizes the sense of general crisis behind Kaufringer's works (which would not quite apply any longer); cf. also Michaela Willers, *Heinrich Kaufringer als Märenautor: das Oeuvre des cgm 270* (Berlin: Logos-Verlag, 2002), for more judicial issues in Kaufringer's tales. See now also Coralie Rippl, *Erzählen als Argumentationsspiel: Heinrich Kaufringers Fallkonstruktionen zwischen Rhetorik, Recht und literarischer Stofftradition*. Bibliotheca Germanica, 61 (Tübingen: Francke, 2014).

The thematic range in Kaufringer's work is considerable, if we begin with his later pieces, where he addresses, for instance, the effects of wine on people who soon enter ever stronger stages of drunkenness (no. 32). Then he criticizes the evil character of urban councilmen (no. 31) and ridicules the foolishness of changes in fashion all the time (no. 30). Not surprisingly, he also included a disputation between a Christian and a Jew about the true nature of the host during the Eucharist (no. 29). Other narratives address the Seven Deadly Sins (no. 25) and the danger when people do not collaborate in the face of criminal threats from the outside (no. 23).

This small selection already indicates the breadth of themes covered by Kaufringer, which allows us to locate him shoulder to shoulder next to some of his major contemporaries, such as Boccaccio (*Decameron*, ca. 1350) and Geoffrey Chaucer (*Canterbury Tales*, ca. 1400).³⁸ Little wonder, hence, that he also included verse narratives deeply determined by religious perspectives, which often seem to form the background of his tales. The discussion of a few of them will allow us to gain deeper insights into this phenomenon, not surprisingly quite characteristic of pre-modern literature, if not of much of all literature throughout time.

The very first of Kaufringer's narratives, "Der Einsiedler und der Engel" (no. 1), dramatically highlights the intriguing dialectics of the sacred and the secular. The protagonist is a hermit who decides one day to study the world on the outside to understand better God's miracles, although, as the narrator emphasizes himself, humans can hardly ever grasp the ultimate truth of this world in its material and spiritual dimensions. The poet thereby indicates the ineffability of divine creation in which things happen that are simply beyond our epistemological grasp. Noetically speaking, we are mostly blind and can only marvel at events as they evolve in front of our eyes.

This is also the case with the hermit who to his chagrin witnesses four horrible crimes committed by a stranger who accompanies him on his exploration of the world outside of his cell. First, that man kills the newborn child of a kind host, then he steals a valuable chalice from an equally hospitable host, but then grants it as a payment to a horrible inn-keeper who had not even given them a good place to sleep, and finally he kills a complete stranger, a young man who comes running up to them, by throwing him off a bridge into a river where he drowns. For the poor hermit, each one of those acts is incomprehensible, but at the end the other man identifies himself, revealing to be an angel who had

³⁸ Albrecht Classen, "Was There a German 'Geoffrey Chaucer' in the Late Middle Ages? The Rediscovery of Heinrich Kaufringer's Verse Narratives as Literary Masterpieces," *Studia Neophilologica* 85.1 (2013): 57–72.

acted upon God's command.³⁹ As the latter finally instructs the hermit: "ker wider in die clusen dein, / wann all die wunder, die got tuot, / die beschehen nur durch guot. / darmit bekümer dich nit mer" (436–39; return to your cell because all miracles which God performs happen for good reasons; do not question anything any longer). The hermit does just that, resists from studying the material existence any further which proves to be impermeable in any way to the human mind, and thus regains the privilege to join "der engel schar" (448; the angelic throng).

The verse narrative "Der verklagte Bauer" (no. 3) pursues seemingly a different perspective, presenting a wealthy and intelligent peasant who is maliciously pursued by the parish priest and the local judge who want to enrich themselves through accusing the peasant of being blasphemous or even a heretic. Although the latter duly pays all his Church tithes, he is a thorn in the priest's side because of his independent mind, so the latter is rather pleased when he believes that he has finally found solid arguments to convict him of having betrayed the Christian faith.

When the case is deliberated in the presence of the bishop, however, the peasant can prove that his public statement about the devastating consequences of a thunderstorm as having been something positive was nothing but a deep reflection of God's workings in punishing people's sinfulness. The peasant had also stated that he had heaven and hell both in his own house, and upon inspection, the bishop learns that the accused had meant his old mother whom he had diligently taken care of for thirty years while she was bound to her bed, thus fulfilling the Fourth Commandment. Finally, the peasant demonstrates that indeed his own horse is smarter than the priest because it had learned from its own painful experience the first time not to go through a dangerous gorge a second time irrespective of the peasant's hard spurring it on. On the contrary, the priest, having slept with the judge's wife for a long time despite the fact that he had been beaten for it

39 Stede, *Schreiben in der Krise* (see note 37), 15–26, summarizes and discusses a number of sources, parallel texts, and later versions of this narrative motif. See now Albrecht Classen, "Rabbi Nissim and His Influence on Medieval German Literature: Rudolf von Ems's *Der guote Gêrhart* and Heinrich Kaufringer's "Der Einsiedler und der Engel": Jewish Wisdom Teachings in the Middle High and Early Modern German Context," *Aschkenas* 108.4 (2017): 349–69. doi:10.1515/asch-2017-0015; idem, "Das Paradox der widersprüchlichen Urteilsprechung und Weltwahrnehmung: götliches vs. menschliches Recht in Heinrich Kaufringers 'Die unschuldige Mörderin' – mit paneuropäischen Ausblicken und einer neuen Quellenspur ('La femme du roi de Portugal')," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* CXX.II (2019): 7–28. See also Henrike Manuwald, "'er kan mit seiner zungen swachen/das recht zuo ainem unrecht machen': von der 'Kritik der Urteilskraft' bei Heinrich Kaufringer," *Rechtsnovellen: Rhetorik, narrative Strukturen und kulturelle Semantiken des Rechts in Kurzzerzählungen des späten Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Pia Claudia Doering and Caroline Emmelius. Philologische Studien und Quellen, 263 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2017), 85–106.

badly repeatedly, could never stop his bad behavior, committing adultery and breaking his own vow of celibacy.

The narrator expresses his great relief over the fact that disloyalty has been punished in this case and that innocence triumphed (683–90). Unfortunately, he also concludes that law and justice are no longer in place here on earth (712–14), so he advises that the individual simply stick to him/herself and abstain from getting involved in the lives of others, as long as it does not involve him or her. The personal peace is the most important aspect (720), and any other approach would lead to suffering and injustice (721).

There are no direct comments about God's working here, but the peasant clearly emerges as an ideal character who practices exactly what the narrator illustrates through his story and this epimythium. Impressively, the bishop emerges as a trustworthy personality who listens to the peasant and accepts his explanations as rational and theologically appropriate: “der baur hat recht mit aller sach” (655; the peasant is correct in every respect). Of course, we cannot forget that he is favorably inclined toward the peasant because of the royal treatment through a feast for the bishop and his court, but the central argument here remains the same, after all; both he and the peasant pursue the principles of law and are in full agreement with the religious teachings, whereas the priest proves to be the worst perpetrator, transgressor, and sinner of them all.

The peasant's worldly activities thus catapult him far beyond the priest because he practices what the priest is preaching, or what the Bible teaches, whereas the priest undermines his own sermons and breaks his vows, pursuing the peasant with extraordinary hatred out of excessive envy. But virtue triumphs, and so the ethical ideals pursued by the peasant, which transforms him into a person loved by God: “so wurd ain frommer hochgemuot” (692; thus, the virtuous person gained high spirits). Tragically, however, as the narrator also comments, while his story ends on a good note, in reality “die boßhait fürgank hat. / trew und frumkait leit ernider” (696–97; evilness dominates, and loyalty and virtue are crushed). Within the literary framework, as Kaufringer indicates, the individual can still hope to achieve piety and live a God-fearing life, whereas he observes the very opposite in real life.

For a final example of how much Kaufringer combined sacred and secular elements, let us look at the narrative “Die fromme Müllerin” (no. 17) where two Dominican friars seek out a miller's wife because they have heard many good things about her. At first, they encounter her two children playing outside, arguing against each other about whose toy house would be stronger, and this by means of references to prayer formulas, pitting the *Pater Noster* against the *Ave Maria*. Then one of them raises the question whether it would be better to rest in God or to have God reside in oneself.

Deeply amazed, the two clerics then enter the mill and find the woman engaged in profound prayers to God. Upon their inquiry when she might have heard a sermon last, she admits that she had been able to attend mass only once that year, though she had kept all words in her heart and would still ponder on them. She then turns the exchange around and emphasizes in her self-defense that it would be better to refrain from committing sins altogether than to go to confession all the time. She also points out that her personal situation as the miller's wife would prevent her from leading a saintly life (118).

All this impresses the two men so much that they sit down with her and engage with this woman in a lengthy exchange about fundamental aspects of the Christian faith: "und verainten sich mit ir sider / in götlicher lieb und auch minn" (120–21; and joined her in divine love and happiness). We do not need to follow the entire discussion; suffice it to observe that she demonstrates a profound understanding of the Christian teachings and has incorporated many of them to the best of her abilities. At the same time, she receives highly meaningful teachings from the two friars and at the end sends them off with her heartfelt wishes, promising to keep them in her prayers (304). Although the narrator had identified them specifically as Dominicans, he then concludes with extraordinary praise for them irrespective of their monastic order, connecting this story with the very first one at least in indirect terms: "es mochten wol zwen engel sein, / von got gesant in menschen schein" (311–12; they might have been angels, sent by God in human shape).

As much as this narrative is squarely placed within the "Sitz im Leben," with the woman's practical and harsh existence as a miller's wife described (and maybe even criticized) in specific terms, the author utilized it as a textual template for spiritual investigations pertaining to a secular individual who has no real opportunity to frequent a church, to go to confession, or to receive adequate theological instructions. Insofar as we also learn something about the woman's children, who similarly perform in a most pious manner following their mother's model, the poet projects here an ordinary scene as was commonly observable outside of late medieval cities – a mill – and yet simultaneously transforms it into a setting of deep mutual religious instructions.⁴⁰

At other times, such as in "Die sieben Hauptsünden" (no. 25), Kaufringer engages exclusively with theological issues, here the Seven Deadly Sins,⁴¹ and in

40 Shana Worthen, "Of Mills and Meaning," *Wind & Water in the Middle Ages: Fluid Technologies from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Steven A. Walton. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 322 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 259–82.

41 Meinolf Schumacher, "Heinrich Kaufringers Gedicht 'Von den sieben Todsünden und den sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes,'" *Jahrbuch der Oswald-von-Wolkenstein-Gesellschaft* 9 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1996/1997), 309–22.

“Das zeitlich Leben” (no. 26) with questions about the right path toward the soul’s salvation while the individual still lives here on earth. Those *mæren*, however, are then followed by others determined by worldly themes again, such as “Streit über Liebe und Schönheit” (no. 29), in which the differences between love (internal value) and beauty (external value) are discussed. This combination of spiritual and worldly themes appears to be not untypical for the late Middle Ages, especially if we compare Kaufringer with his contemporaries Franco Sacchetti or Geoffrey Chaucer.

Conclusion

For our purposes, it would not matter whether some of the verse narratives currently attributed to Kaufringer might have actually come from the pen by another poet known as Der Teichner. His collection as a whole proves to be an intriguing combination of worldly and spiritual themes, with the latter supported by references to the former, and vice versa. But Kaufringer was not an exception in that regard, as we could observe also in the case of Ulrich Bonerius’s fables, and then of previous courtly romances, the heroic epic *Nibelungenlied*, and love poetry (*Minnesang*). We are, however, not dealing with all the same motifs; instead, sometimes we observe the intimate integration of the sacred (God) into the secular narrative, and sometimes we notice that the poets engaged both with religious and worldly themes simultaneously, deliberately reflecting on their direct interactions.

In Kaufringer’s narratives, to be sure, we notice the intensive reflections on the divine in a number of cases, and then also reflections on the worldly in religiously determined examples. In Ulrich Bonerius’s fables, spiritual and ethical concerns intimately intersect with moral and political ones, but virtue and rationality also matter critically in many of his texts. While I only touched on some courtly romances (Hartmann von Aue, Gottfried von Strassburg, and Wolfram von Eschenbach) and on one poem by Walther von der Vogelweide in passing, we could discover in each case the same phenomenon, that is, the virtually harmonious interlacing of both dimensions. Whether it is the pursuit of love or the pursuit of the Grail, whether it is the quest for the redemption of one’s sins or the attempt to gain honor and dignity in this world, medieval poets commonly interwove their narratives or poems with the spiritual/sacred and the worldly/secular. It would be practically impossible to draw a clear line separating both spheres, especially because God’s working is ubiquitous in all material conditions, as we hear in Kaufringer’s introduction to his first narrative, “Der Einsiedler und der Engel” (8–9).

All this implies that we cannot approach medieval literature (or art/architecture) without a good understanding of this dialectical relationship, this intimate

correspondence between both dimensions, the spiritual and the worldly, both of which are to be viewed through the lens of the other, as all poets discussed here richly confirm.⁴² Little wonder that we also observe the phenomenon of sacred laughter, the human delight over some material issues within the context of the spiritual. There are countless examples of comedy and laughter within the Church, whether in sculptures or in narratives, which powerfully underscores the complexity of the topic addressed here.⁴³

It would be a highly promising enterprise to investigate this rich approach to life by means of spiritual and secular perspective also in modern and post-modern literature. For our purposes, however, we have already assembled sufficient evidence that the sacred and the material themes were of equal importance in pre-modern literature (and art) and played closely hand in hand to achieve the desired results, to embed the worldly experience in a divine context, as Dante Alighieri was to do most brilliantly in his *Divina Commedia*, and as the many poets discussed here aimed at as well.⁴⁴

42 For parallel perspectives on the same phenomenon, see the contributions to *Die Welt und Gott – Gott und die Welt? Zum Verhältnis von Religiosität und Profanität im “christlichen Mittelalter”* ed. Elisabeth Vavra. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zu Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, 9 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019). However, none of the examples discussed here are considered by the contributors. Stefanie Kollmann-Obwegeser, in her “Körper und Raum: Das Konzept des *homo interior* und *homo exterior* in höfischen und geistlichen Texten des Mittelalters (123–31), focuses on didactic literature, primarily composed by Thomasin von Zerclaere (*Der Welsche Gast*) and Caesarius von Heisterbach (*Dialogus miraculorum*). Dominik Streit, in his “Die Klausur in Wolframs *Parzival*: zur strukturierenden Funktion eines religiösen Raumes” (133–53), limits himself to a discussion of the hermit’s cell in Wolfram’s work, which functions as an important narrative fulcrum.

43 See the contributions to *Komik und Sakralität: Aspekte einer ästhetischen Paradoxie in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Anja Grebe. Tradition – Reform – Innovation, 9 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2005); *Seliges Lächeln und höllisches Gelächter: Das Lachen in Kunst und Kultur des Mittelalters*, ed. Winfried Wilhelmy. Publikationen des Bischöflichen Dom- und Diözesanmuseums Mainz, 1 (Mainz: Bischöfliches Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Mainz, 2012); *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, Its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

44 I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Emerita Marilyn L. Sandidge, Westfield State University, MA, for her helpful comments on this paper.

Vered Tohar

The Poetic and Ideological Blurring of Boundaries in the Jewish Book of Ethics *Orḥot Šaddiqim*

Abstract: This chapter emerges out of dozens of medieval folktales that were included in Jewish pre-modern non-fiction morality essays. The combination of literary folkloristic material and non-fiction moral homilies creates a unique blend of the secular and the sacred. The two may subvert one another, but they also support each other in building a multi-dimensional piece of literature. I suggest a methodological contribution: reading Jewish moral pre-modern literature as a manifestation of four textual dimensions: genre, function, poetic, and rhetoric. Those dimensions enable the literary interpretation and offer an explanation for the acceptance and preservation of those texts through the last 400 years of Jewish culture.

Keywords: *Musar* Literature; Jewish ethics; *Orḥot Šaddiqim*; *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*; Yiddish; Judeo-Arabic; censorship; fable

The Cultural Context of *Orḥot Šaddiqim* (*The Ways of the Righteous*)

The Hebrew anonymous book of ethics, *Orḥot Šaddiqim*, first published in Prague in 1581¹ forms the hub of this article. The goal of the following discussion is to study the nature of this work as a literary-cultural phenomenon, by means of the concept of ‘the blurring of boundaries,’ which I deconstruct into four discussion topics: (1) on the level of the genre – the blurring of the boundaries between

1 For more on this book, see Jeffrey R. Woolf, “When Was the Book ‘*Orḥot Šaddiqim*’ Written?” *Qiryat Sēfer* 64.1 (1993): 321–22 [Hebrew]; Mordechai Pachter, “On the Matter of the Quotations from ‘*Orḥot Šaddiqim*’ in the *Musar* [Ethics] Books of the Sages in Safed,” *Qiryat Sēfer* 47 (1972): 487–92 [Hebrew]. Assaf Navarro, “Editing and Theology of *Orhot Zaddiqim*,” M.A. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002 [Hebrew]; Moshe Ḥalamish, “On the Question of the Identity of the Book *Bēt Middot*, Mentioned in *Sēfer Ḥaredim* and *Bereshit Ḥokhmah*,” *Qiryat Sēfer* 47 (1972): 169–78 [Hebrew]; Vered Tohar and Noga Rubin, “A Contemporary Study of the Shared Stories of the Yiddish *Sēfer Middot* (Isny, 1542) and *Orḥot Šaddiqim* (Prague, 1581),” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 34 (2021): 71–96 [Hebrew].

literary and non-literary prose; (2) on the functional level – the blurring of the boundaries between religious-ritualistic literature and recreational reading; (3) on the poetic level – the blurring of the boundaries between original creations and adapted works; (4) and on the rhetorical level – the blurring of the boundaries between the individual author's voice and the voice of the institutional group he claims to represent. Coming from the perspective of blurred boundaries, I will analyze the consequences of four different types of boundaries blurring on the literary design of this book and ask: What does this say about the author's response to the readers' expectations and the book's reception? My basic premise is that the application of the concept of 'blurring boundaries', as a main principle in the reading of this text, explains its wide distribution and reception, and not only in his own generation, but even to this very day; in fact, it is the main key to understanding the manner in which generations of the book's readers read it. Although this book's audience changed over the past hundreds of years, its blurred boundaries explain its power to survive in the Jewish cultural worldview.

First of all, I provide a general orientation about pre-modern Hebrew and Jewish *Musar* (ethics) literature. The term 'Musar literature' is a general name for over twelve literary types, each one of which has its own system of poetic conventions. For example: a saying; a proverb; an exemplum; a legend; a last will; a sermon, etc.² During the eight hundred years between the tenth century and the eighteenth century, *Musar* literature served as a central arena for the creation of Hebrew prose, alongside *Halakhah* (Jewish law), *Midrash* (homiletic interpretation of the Bible), *pērush* (commentary), *khroniqah* (historical chronicles), and *ha-sod* (lit., the secret; Jewish mysticism). Jewish *Musar* literature is characterized by the relatively brief development of each idea under discussion, and by its simplicity of expression and purposefulness. All the above, because this type of literature seeks to provide practical interpretations of the Jewish codes for behavior and thinking, to execute abstract theological ideas, and to promote religious and ethical values. *Musar* literature was written by the rabbinic, philosophical, or mystical factions.³

Some of these *Musar* books consist of chapters, each one of which is dedicated to a different subject related to a human characteristic, or good or bad behaviors, that the chapter is trying either to encourage or purge among the readers; such chapters seek to gather and to briefly, though comprehensively, discuss the subject

2 Joseph Dan, *The Hebrew Story in the Middle Ages: Studies of Its History* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974) [Hebrew]; Isaiah Tishby, *Hebrew Ethical Literature: Selected Texts, with Introduction, Notes and Commentary – 10th–12th Centuries* (Jerusalem: M. Newman, 1970), 11–24 [Hebrew].

3 Zeev Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World, 1700–1900* (Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 46–56.

being taught, based on early sources. Sometimes, these essays are called: “*Sifrut middot*” (ethics literature).⁴

Contrary to *Halakhic* literature, or Kabbalah in the Jewish culture (that specifically target an educated elite readership), Hebrew *Musar* books deal with ethical values, have a popular nature, and are presumably aimed at a broad common denominator – despite being written *leshon ha-qodesh* – in the sacred Hebrew tongue. They also existed in opposition to those *Musar* books that had been written and printed in other Jewish languages or had been translated from Hebrew into other Jewish vernaculars (e.g., Judeo-Arabic, Yiddish, and Ladino) – that narrowed the Hebrew *Musar* reading audience to those positively oriented toward the Hebrew language, usually men. However, the writings in the holy tongue, the Jewish *lingua franca*, enabled Jews from across the Diaspora to read Hebrew – from Europe to North Africa, in Israel and in Asia – all had access to the contents of these *Musar* works.⁵

The popularity of the pre-modern Jewish *Musar* literature was also partly the outcome of the way in which they were distributed (that is, as published works). Their printing enabled relatively quick and cheap distribution across the Jewish Diaspora, as well as the canonization of *Musar* authors and works. Additionally, in the wake of the printing revolution, books began to take on an economic value and become a profitable product; as such, printers tended to invest in the publication of works with intriguing contents, as long as they did not instigate disputes or cause any form of antagonism: not on the part of the readers, nor the Christian Church authorities, nor the Catholic Censor, nor from the local community’s rabbinical authorities. This fact influenced the contents and styles of many of these *Musar* works but enabled those that met the criteria for reception to become the leading genre printed, following directly behind books of the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Hebrew prayerbooks for over a hundred years, and still amid Orthodox Jewry.⁶

Contemporary literary reading of such pre-modern *Musar* works tends to consider their texts as tools for the expression of viewpoints, urges, and repressed wishes, since a number of these *Musar* texts contained transgressive contents, of

4 Joseph Dan, *Hebrew Ethical and Homiletical Literature* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 47 [Hebrew].

5 Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth-Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 238 [Hebrew]; see also Chava Turniansky, “Oral and Written Sermons as Mediating between Canonical Culture and the Public,” *Studies in the History of Popular Culture: Collected Research*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1996), 183–96 [Hebrew].

6 Zeev Gries, “The Hassidic Conduct (Hanhagot) Literature as an Expression of Conduct and Ethos,” Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1979 [Hebrew].

which the authors and their contemporary audiences were either unaware or ignored, while stressing the didactic aspects.⁷

The present article deals with textual analysis from a current, critical perspective; therefore, it reveals covert trends, unintentionally attested by the text, or unbeknown to the author. The implicit assumption in this reading is that *Musar* texts may be read, and their commentaries accepted thanks to the toolbox of literary theory, and because such modern readings may contribute to the distinction of layers of meaning and a better understanding of these texts. Reading a text from the perspective of blurred boundaries is a fresh way to do a literary interpretation of the text of *The Ways of the Righteous*.

The Blurring of the Boundaries between Literary and Non-Literary Prose

The poetic and textual structure of *The Ways of the Righteous* consists of twenty-eight chapters, called “*sha’arim*” (gates), each one dedicated to a different human characteristic: those deemed positive in the author’s eyes and by his faction (e.g., speediness, being God-fearing); and those features considered negative by the author and his faction (e.g., spreading slander, laziness); positive emotions (like, love and shame); and negative emotions (like, jealousy and hate). Each chapter is structured as a single, continuous text, in which there are transitions between the paragraphs that provide extensive descriptions and explanations on the studied characteristic or emotion, along with relevant quotations from the rabbinic sources, the Hebrew Bible, and even from non-Jewish philosophers, with assiduous connections between those quotations, as well as the author’s own opinion on the subject under study, and short stories or segments of prose narrative.

In this regard, the poetic structure of *The Ways of the Righteous* is no different than that of the other medieval *Musar* books, also printed after the fifteenth century, such as: *Hovot ha-Levavot* by Bahya b. Joseph Ibn Paquda (1050–1120); *Menorat ha-Ma’or* by R. Isaac b. Abraham Aboab (fl. thirteenth century); and *Ma’alot ha-Middot* by R. Yehiel b. Yequtiel Anav (fl. late thirteenth century). Indeed, one of the main characteristics of the Hebrew *Musar* literature, that I wish to stress here, is those transitions between the various poetic and rhetorical formats embedded

7 Vered Tohar, “Women Protagonists in the Hebrew Morality Compilation *Šemaḥ Šaddiq* by Leon Modena,” *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* 15 (2017): 47–71.

within the text, separating words of commentary, explanations, quotations, and folktales by blurring the boundaries of the different genres.⁸

This characteristic indicates that the author considers such transitions between the various literary forms to be both legitimate and doable, even in the readers' eyes – that not only do they not disturb the reading, but rather contribute to the readers' reading experience. This may be learned from the constant repetition of this example in all the pre-modern Hebrew *Musar* books; that is to say, this was what the audience wanted and expected, so the authors responded appropriately. These inter-format transitions also suggest that both the authors and their readerships may be informing us that they did not see a sharp distinction between the various poetic formats, i.e., they found the transitions to be transparent, almost nonexistent.⁹

Thus, these transitions between poetic styles, achieved by means of connecting words, also served as code words. This phenomenon may be demonstrated by means of a segment taken from the chapter on 'humility' (ch. 2):

The humble person is satisfied with what he[/she] has, that God gave him[/her], whether it is a lot or a little, as it was said (Psalms 37: 16): "Better the little that the righteous man has ..." And having that, his[/her] heart will rest quietly, not bothered by this world, and so, his[/her] heart is free to wander in wisdom and do God's work. The humble person gives people the benefit of the doubt. An exemplary parable – They asked one of the *ḥassidim* [a follower of the Hassidic faction]: "What would you gain by becoming the master of your generation?" The *ḥassid* replied: "Because every person I saw, I considered to be better than I am. If he was wiser than me, I said: 'He's also more God-fearing than me, by virtue of his greater wisdom.' And if he was less wise than me, I said: 'He errs unintentionally, while I err willfully.' And if I was older than him, I said: 'His humilities are less than mine.' And if he was as wise and as old as I am, I said: 'His heart is better for God than my heart; because I know the sins I've committed, but don't know his.' And if he was richer than me, I said that he donated more charity than I did.' So, these are the reasons that I respected others, and I would defer to them." The defects of the humble person are forgotten, because the world wants to respect him/her, and his/her aides are many. A parable – They spoke about one of the kings, that when many people were asleep at night, he got up by himself and fixed the candle, so it would not go out. They said to him: "Why didn't you command us [to do it]?" He said to

⁸ For example, Pachter defined *Rēshit Ḥokhmah* as an "ethical Kabbalistic book" in his article "*Rēshit Ḥokhmah* by R. Elijah de Vidas and Its Abridgements," *Qiryat Sefer* 47 (1972): 686–710. Woolf defined *Orḥot Šaddiqim* as an ethical book. Israel Ta-Shma defined *Menorat ha-Ma'or* as one of the classic Hebrew ethical books; see Ta-Shma, "The Riddle of the Book *Menorat ha-Ma'or* and Its Solution," *Tarbiz* 64.3 (1995): 395–400.

⁹ See, especially Avriel Bar Levav, "Magic in Jewish Ethical Literature," *Tarbiz* 72.3 (2003): 389–414, and especially pages 395–98. Reimund Leicht, "Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture Online*, ed. Dan Diner (Stuttgart: Springer-Verlag, 2018). https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jewish-history-and-culture/ethics-COM_0211 (last accessed on Feb. 1, 2023).

them: “I arose as a king and came back as one.” And they said: “One who is contemptible in his own eyes, is great in the eyes of others.”¹⁰

The structure of this paragraph is as follows:

- A statement in the author’s voice: “The humble person is satisfied with what he/she has, that God gave him/her, whether it is a lot or a little.”
- Then, a word that prefaces a biblical quotation – “*she-ne’emar*” [“As it was said”]:
- The biblical verse (Psalms 37: 16): “*Tov me’at la-tsaddiq...*” [“Better the little that the righteous man has...”].
- Another statement in the author’s voice: “The humble person gives people the benefit of the doubt.”
- Then, words that mark the beginning of a tale – “*mashal ki...*” [“an exemplary fable or parable...”].
- A narrative text: They asked one of the *ḥassidim* [a follower of the Hassidic faction]: “What would you gain by becoming the master of your generation?” The *ḥassid* replied: “Because every person I saw, I considered to be better than I am. If he was wiser than me, I said: ‘He’s also more God-fearing than me, by virtue of his greater wisdom.’ And if he was less wise than me, I said: ‘He errs unintentionally, while I err willfully.’ And if I was older than him, I said: ‘His humilities are less than mine.’ And if he was as wise and as old as I am, I said: ‘His heart is better for God than my heart; because I know the sins I’ve committed, but don’t know his.’ And if he was richer than me, I said that he donated more charity than I did.’ So, these are the reasons that I respected others, and I would defer to them.”
- Another statement in the author’s voice: “The defects of the humble person are forgotten, because the world wants to respect him/her, and his/her aides are many.”
- Then, a word that marks the beginning of a tale – “*mashal ...*”
- Another narrative text: They spoke about one of the kings, that when many people were asleep at night, he got up by himself and fixed the candle, so it would not go out. They said to him: “Why didn’t you command us [to do it]?” He said to them: “I arose as a king and came back as one.”
- Then, a word that marks a non-Jewish philosophical statement, voiced by the author – “*ve-amru*” [“... and they said”].
- A paraphrase: “One is jealous of every virtue, except for humility.”

¹⁰ All the English translations of the Hebrew sources here are by Ethelea Katzenell, the translator of this article.

- Then, again, the word that marks a non-Jewish philosophical statement, voiced by the author – “*ve-amru*.”
- Another paraphrase: “One who is contemptible in his own eyes, is great in the eyes of others.”

Here, indeed, many marked transitions are made in this text, by means of code words that help to join the different textual segments together, in order to construct a whole idea. The author’s voice is intermingled with the biblical voice, those of the philosophers, and those of the storytellers, all within the same chapter – one parable and another novel bit of wisdom. We learn that tales provide a way to think about the world, without logical assumptions, but rather by tangible means;¹¹ nonetheless, they are integrated into the non-narrative prose and complete it. The relations between the non-narrative and the narrative prose are co-existent, accommodating, rather than conflicting or confrontational – neither solely cognitive, nor only emotional. This *Musar* text contains opposites but tolerates conceptual transitions between different kinds of prose.¹² It seems that the readers accepted these things in this manner, for if they had not, such texts would not have been accepted, nor would they have had so many translations and re-publications.

The embedded folktale used in this chapter, regarding the humble king and his many aides, strengthens the statement bearing the claim that humble people have many helpers, and their defects are forgotten. It is certainly clear that the king in this tale had many aides, but what does that have to do with the “defects”? Such a discrepancy may indicate that this tale was not invented by the author of *The Ways of the Righteous* but that he was familiar with the tale and decided to incorporate it here, despite its incomplete suitability, as a bridge between the non-narrative prose and the narrative prose; this usually occurs in situations in which a heterogenic text is composed of segments coming from other contexts, mixed together. The function of the folktale here is to provide an example of the principle discussed in the non-narrative text.¹³

¹¹ See, especially Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 10–14.

¹² See, especially Pavel Thomas, “Literary Genres as Norms and Good Habits,” *New Literary History* 34.2 (2003): 201–10.

¹³ See the discussion on this principle at: Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale*, 10–14 (see note 11); Dan Ben-Amos, “Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres,” *Folklore Genres* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1976), 93–124.

Blurring of Boundaries between Religious-Ritualistic Literature and Recreational Reading

Another blurring of boundaries that occurs in *The Ways of the Righteous* is expressed in the questions: “What is the goal of the book”? “Who reads it”? and “When should it be read”? In order to answer these questions, it is best to turn to the book’s Introduction (although the author is unknown), which can certainly teach us about its aims, as intended by the author or the publisher, or both. This Introduction is exceedingly long, and it includes a long sermon on the nature of Humanity, on the five senses, and on the ability to change from birth to old age. In the last paragraph of the Introduction, a statement of the goal of the book is given:

This book is also called “*Séfer ha-Middot*” [i.e., book of the moral qualities – virtues and vices], and it was written and sealed with the ring of wisdom, to teach humans knowledge, to serve in the hands of every person as an artistic tool, to improve within himself moral qualities and deeds. For an artist who holds the tools of his art – is able to accomplish his work. But when he does not have the tools of his trade – he will not be able to do anything. Therefore, listen to the *Musar* [ethics] and take the tools of your trade to improve your nature. Surely, you will see: Those who have many kinds of coins, small and large, but does not know their worth – will not know what to buy with each one; not until he knows the value of each coin. And one must also know which coin the king has disqualified, and commanded that it not be used. After weighing each and every coin and learning its value, only then can one know what necessities may be gotten, of equal value to each coin; and the disqualified coin, forbidden for use by the king – one must take care not to spend it, lest he be fined. In this manner, a person gets the most benefit and joy from each and every coin. But the foolish person, who does not weigh and prepare himself, who spends what the king disqualified – there is no doubt that such a one will come to great harm. And you, my son, take this parable as a case for comparison to your many moral qualities, large and small, and weight each and every one [virtue and vice] on the balance [scales] of your wisdom. This, until you know the value of every one of your moral qualities, and against which The Great King [God] has given warning, that they not be found in you, except where they will not cause you to incur harm and punishment. Thus, you will reach perfection, and become an artist with all the tools of your trade. Now, we will provide information about the roots of these moral qualities and their offshoots, their usefulness and harmfulness. Our intent is to return human nature from foolishness to the love of the *Musar* [ethics], so that the simpletons will know the nature of the righteous. And may God (who overlooks petty considerations) grant us help and inform us if our ways are straight and our paths just, as we teach the tribes of Yeshurun [the People of Israel], the favored community.

Both the sacred and the secular appear together in this text, though this does not mean that one must choose between them.¹⁴ There is no need for analytical categories, nor must one reject any contents as being unsuitable. It all resides together in the same text, under one auspices, and practically speaking, each contradiction discovered within the text, or between the text and its intended meaning, is something that the reader peacefully accommodates. According to Barbara Newman, here, a poetics is revealed of ‘both/and,’ which is a poetics of inclusion (rather than one of exclusion), with which it is possible to live in peace. Moreover, her term “imaginative theology” describes the situation in which an author approaches religious and theological subjects using the poetic techniques – metaphors, allegories, verbal imagery – in order to simplify them and make them more accessible.¹⁵

As I showed in the previous paragraph, even in his Introduction, the anonymous author included an economic parable about two types of people and how they use the coins they have. According to this story, there are three different types of coins: small ones (having low value); large ones (with higher values); and coins that the king has disqualified as legal coinage (the use of which is forbidden). The first man, the sage, according to the author, knows the value of each coin and not to use the illegal ones – so he is successful. The second man, the fool, does not know the value of each coin, uses the disqualified ones, and so is punished. Following the parable, the author interprets it in his own voice: the large and small coins represent positive moral qualities; and the illegal ones – the immoral qualities; and the king is God. Thus, the author of *The Ways of the Righteous* is expressing his awareness of the difficulty he is presenting to the readers of his book. Contrary to the occurrences in the parable, since these moral qualities are abstract, and cannot be seen or touched, people must exercise their wisdom and common sense, to weigh each behavior, in order to ascertain the category to which it belongs.

This means that, here, the tale is meant to demonstrate the abstract requirement and to explain, in an illustrative manner, the hard-to-understand conceptual and behavioral principles. Therefore, its function is to make accessible and broker a philosophical principle. However, one may assume that some of the book’s readers do not need a tale to understand the philosophical principle. One may also assume that the author of *The Ways of the Righteous* knows this. Why, then, did he nonetheless choose to embed a tale here? The author’s intention to integrate such a large number of narrative texts into his explanatory words, as well as a non-nar-

¹⁴ Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 7–8.

¹⁵ Newman, *God and the Goddesses* (see note 14), 7 and 294–303 for more on ‘imaginative theology.’

rative sermon, also stems from the need to be appealing and intriguing, to produce curiosity, enjoyment, and interest by means of aesthetic, quality contents – as if talking about a book for recreational reading, rather than about a book that fits in to the routine daily reading schedule of a devout Jew. This situation points to the blurring of boundaries that exists, in this case, in regard to the manner in which the reader uses this book: Is it to amuse himself? Or to learn something from it as a devout believer, as part of his daily routine religious ritual and study?¹⁶

The Blurring of the Boundaries between Original Creation and Adapted Works

The book, *The Ways of the Righteous*, exists in the blurred space between originality, on the one hand, and adaptation, on the other. This fact is manifested in the structure, the subjects, and the poetics. The structure of this specific book was influenced by the structure of the prior *Musar* books found in Jewish culture; that is, the division into chapters, each one dedicated to a concentrated discussion on one topic, is, for example, similar to the format of an earlier *Musar* book: *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* (*Duties of the Hearts*), originally written in Judeo-Arabic by Bahya Ibn Paquda in the eleventh century, and translated into Hebrew in the twelfth century by R. Judah Ibn Tibbon. As similar structure is also found in another thirteenth century *Musar* book, *Menorat ha-Ma'or* (*Shining Candelabra*) by R. Isaac Aboab. Even the subjects of the chapters in *The Ways of the Righteous* had been discussed in previously published Jewish *Musar* books. For example, the chapter headings: flattery, pride, generosity, and so on – are similar to those found in the *Musar* books: *Tiqun Middot ha-Nefesh* (*The Improvement of the Mortal Qualities*) by Solomon Ibn Gabirol (eleventh century) and *Sēfer Lēv Ṭov* (*Book of the Good Heart*) by Isaac b. Elyaqim of Posen (seventeenth century).

In regard to the complex poetics of the text of *The Ways of the Righteous*, it is composed of folktales woven into the sermons, as demonstrated at the onset of this paper. Even this combination of narrative and non-narrative prose was not invented by the author of *The Ways of the Righteous*, since earlier *Musar* books, and ones that would follow it, use the same poetic technique. One of the most popular ones

¹⁶ This issue is discussed at great length from different perspectives; see, especially *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Toys, Games, and Entertainment*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 23 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019); *Courtly Pastimes*, ed. Gloria Allaire and Julie Human (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2023).

– *Qav Yashar (The Just Measure)* by R. Zvi Hirsch Kaidanover (1648–1712) would have hundreds of embedded tales, as does *Rēshit Hōkhmah (The Beginning of Wisdom)*, written by R. Elijah b. Moses de Vidas (sixteenth century), and *Shēveṭ Musar (The Rod of Morality)* by R. Elijah ha-Kohen ha-Itamari (seventeenth century).¹⁷

Even the inventory of the tales found in *The Ways of the Righteous* is not new; many of them have earlier versions elsewhere, both in *Musar* books and in anthologies of medieval folktales. Take, for instance, the tale of “The Blind Men,” found in “*Sha’ar ha-Simḥah*” (the gate/chapter on joy) in *The Ways of the Righteous*¹⁸:

...and take in hand a nice fable on this matter; and it is like a hundred blind men walking one after the other; each one with his hand on the shoulder of his friend, and at the head of them all, there is a man who can see, and he is leading them all in his wake. Indeed, every individual knows that even if he has his hand on his friend’s shoulder, and his friend is leading him, this leadership does not emanate from him, rather they are all being pulled after the seeing man at the front; and if he should slip out of their line, they would all stumble and fall. Everyone should take this to heart, and consider God to be the leader, and we are all like the blind, and each one of us may cause others to deviate, and depend on our friend’s assistance, yet even the friend would not have the strength, were it not for the Supreme Leader, who sets all His paths straight, and after Whom one need not think.

Obviously, a folktale such as this was not invented by the author of *The Ways of the Righteous*. Not only does it also appear in the *Musar* book: *Duties of the Hearts*,¹⁹ but it is a well-known Christian tale that teaches about the dialogue in which the author of *The Ways of the Righteous* is involved with his Christian surroundings. This tale, which is essentially an allegory, talks about a procession of blind men led by a seeing leader, who carries all the responsibility for the safety of all those he leads. This allegory is originally found in the New Testament (Gospel According to St. Luke 6: 39: “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into

¹⁷ Tishby, *Hebrew Ethical Literature* (see note 2), ix.

¹⁸ Since these folktales are embedded in the *Musar* text, they do not have their original captions; I gave them titles.

¹⁹ Here is the English translation of the version found in *Hovot ha-Levavot*: “... And the second part is the unity of God in the heart and in the language by way of reception, because he believes those from whom he received, but does not know the truth of the matter by his own intellect and intelligence. And he is like a blind man, who is pulled behind a man who sees, and it is possible that he will receive [help] from a receiver like himself, in the company of other blind men, where each one places a hand on the shoulder of the companion before him, until they reach the seeing man at the head of the group, and he is guiding them all. For if this seeing man should misstep or ignore them, and is not careful when safeguarding them, or lest one of them stumbles, or something bad happens to them. They will all suffer the same fate and stray off their path, and perhaps fall into a pit or a ditch or they might trip on something that will prevent them from going forward.”

the ditch”?)²⁰ This verse was also realized in the plastic art of that period, in the painting entitled: “Parable of the Blind,” painted by Pieter Bruegel, the Elder (1525–1569) – before the first Hebrew edition of *The Ways of the Righteous* saw the light.

Surprisingly, the inclusion of the Christian fable in this Jewish *Musar* chapter on joy, actually inspired open social criticism.²¹ Explicit social criticism is also found at the end of the tale in the form of a comment by the speaker that states that, in the Hebrew version the conclusion is: “... that the Lord is the Leader, and we are all like the blind, thus, we are all helped and assisted by our friends; yet, our friends would be powerless, were it not for the Supreme Leader, who provides straight paths, and none need hesitate to follow Him.” That is to say – Everyone should know that God guides us on His paths.

This Jewish adaptation of the old Christian fable and its insertion into the text of *The Ways of the Righteous* expresses, on the one hand, the author’s need and desire to connect with a popular theme, one that is famous and familiar; on the other hand, he has given it a special and original tone. In any case, the originality of *The Ways of the Righteous* is achieved by its unique integration of the familiar tales in their new textual contexts – either in another chapter, or regarding a different topic, or at a new location within the overall fabric of this book. Indeed, in this instance, the “Parable of the Blind” was embedded in the chapter dealing with joy, thus creating a new layer of interpretation of this tale, stemming from a novel context. As such, this narrative, like many other tales in the book, stands on the blurry boundary between originality and adaptation.

The Blurring of the Boundaries between the Author’s Voice and the Collective Voice

The poetics of a book on human qualities requires renewed consideration of the concepts of ‘the speaker’ and ‘the author’ as elements within the genre. First, in regard to the implicit author. The author dictates the order of the subjects discussed in the various chapters; he creates the internal divisions within each chapter, and the sequence of the narrative that the speaker presents to the readers. The author’s role in these books is exceptionally important, because he must determine the overall order in which the different qualities will be discussed, the volume of

²⁰ *The Holy Bible, authorized King James Version* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, c1957), 80.

²¹ The ‘joy’ here refers to the joy of observing the commandments, not to an immodest or unrestrained display. This is the first book, except for *Kad ha-Qemaḥ* (*The Flour Jar*, Constantinople, 1515), by Baḥya b. Asher Ibn Ḥalawah, that dedicated a chapter to ‘joy.’

the discussion on each topic, and the internal order of each one. The second most important function is that of the speaker, who bears the task of relaying the didactic contents. This speaker is reliable and creates the narrative sequence of the text; his is the authoritarian voice, the sermonizer, and very significant, because he distills the overt messages that the author is trying to pass on. It is the speaker who transfers the story from the narrative level to the theological one. He creates the level of the message, that is, essentially, the most important level of the text, in regard to its potential.

In the case of *The Ways of the Righteous*, indeed, the textual language is mixed. It is possible to identify at least five distinct types of speech in it, as follows:

Type 1: Direct address to the reader: "...and now, hear the importance of generosity" (chapter on 'generosity'). Here, the speaker transforms into an overt, yet intimate guide, who speaks directly to the reader and explains the studied principle.

Type 2: General speech in the third person: "Most of the world is not cautious to avoid idle talk" (chapter on 'repentance'). Here, the author becomes impersonal, serving as the collective voice. He does not personally claim ownership of this statement, nor of its opinion, rather presents it as a collective axiom.

Type 3: Speech in the first-person plural: "Here, we completed three things that a person will always remember" (chapter on 'remembering'). A statement such as that creates a collective perception, a collective common-denominator, and places the author in the same proverbial basket together with his readers; that is, he is not personally preaching ethics to them, rather, along with them, he is responding to the group's demand.

Type 4: Personal speech in the first person: "And now, I have 20 matters to write for you" (chapter on 'repentance'). In this case, the author puts himself personally into the text, by affirming that the contents are original, as is his emotional involvement.

Type 5: A declared quotation: "... as was said by our rabbis, of blessed memory," followed by lines from other authors, preceding our anonymous author.

The mixture between all these voices creates an actual polyphony, consisting of simultaneous, parallel voices in the text. Michael Bakhtin coined the concept of 'polyphony' in literature (i. e., multiple-voices in a given authorial text)²² in order to describe various levels of discourse found in prose texts, existing side-by-side and competing with each other. The outcome is a situation in which there are multiple

²² Michael Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984). Bakhtin's classical theories are well known as they supply an important tool for understanding and interpreting literary texts while they also provide a way to understand human activity and culture.

perspectives, or different sub-cultures, even individuation of images. Different levels of discourse also express different political positions, and even distinct aesthetic preferences.

The polyphonic text is a written and formulated linguistic expression; as such, polyphony stresses the fact that language is not a tool merely for representing reality, but rather that the language itself may be the object of the discussion. Awareness of polyphony sharpens the fact that the text is not a single monologue but consists of many layers and departments of discourse. The subject being voiced is not homogenous – it has a number of channels; accordingly, there are: languages of figures; languages of speakers; the language of the author; that of the transition from one genre to another; the dialogue between what was spoken and how it was said – all these aspects create a complex, stylized system, expressed by the linguistic transitions.²³

In Bakhtin's theory, this polyphonic variety is related to another concept – 'the carnival.' 'The carnival' is the name of the game-like, internal movement between subversive political streams that seek to shake up and undermine the existing social order. In literature, 'the carnival' is expressed by all forms of boundary crashing and the crossing of lines that have political meanings; this is because they publicly weaken the seemingly necessary and ostensibly unbreakable conventional order, established for the survival of human society. 'The carnival' suspends all that exists in the present, in favor of a special 'temporo-spatial nature,' where a new reality is created, theatrical, fictional, stylized, and eccentric.²⁴

Bakhtin claims that polyphony is always 'carnavalesque' because it allows anti-establishment opinions to be heard, by releasing those voices from authoritarian control: of the state; of the establishment; of the society; and even from the speaker him/herself, within the intratextual plain. Furthermore, the advantage of the modern novel is that it is able to stress its own carnivalesque structure. This claim about the carnivalesque construction of the novel is also valid in regard to much earlier texts, when they, too, have heterogenic structures, abounding in pre-faces and endings, spoken by many voices.

23 Michael Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981); David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990); *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, ed. Gary S. Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989); see also Michael Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), ch. 2.

24 Michael Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his Time*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968); Umberto Eco, "Frames of Comic Freedom," *Carnival!*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), 1–9; Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985).

Discussion: Is this Blurring Fortuitous or Intentional?

The assumption of *Musar* books, like *The Ways of the Righteous* is that human-beings will be able to change their patterns of thought and their behaviors after reading this book. In other words, reading this book is *active* reading that influences the spiritual and emotional state of the reader, causing him/her to change. This is not an easy change, since it may require a complete change in the reader's personality, or a change of identity. Simply stated, the impact of this book on its reader is psychological. This conclusion places great responsibility on the *Musar* book, as a material possession of the reader, meant to affect him/her spiritually. In accordance with this conception, the book gains a function in the real world.

In his classic article (1954), American folklorist and anthropologist William R. Bascom formulated the four functions of folklore. That article eventually became the corner-stone of Functionalism in the research of popular folktales.²⁵ According to Bascom, the folktale has four goals: (1) to amuse, be pleasurable, and to provide an escape from reality; (2) to revitalize collective values and to revalidate collective customs and ceremonies; (3) to educate and reaffirm desired values, though sometimes by means of scare tactics; and (4) to activate social pressure and criticism on individuals. These four functions are intended to convert the individual into an integral part of his/her communal identity, by way of reconciliation, persuasion, and the internalization of the fact that the rules and regulations are personally beneficial to him/her, as well as being for the greater good of the community to which s/he belongs.

Stemming from Bascom's perceptions, it is possible to learn that *The Ways of the Righteous* serves all four functions listed above, perhaps answering the question regarding the cause of its popularity and enormous distribution, both in Hebrew and in the other Jewish languages. It is a guidebook to a meaningful, moral, Jewish life, preaching high ethical standards of behavior and a righteous way of thinking from birth to death. This book incorporates over 100 tales, brought as examples that accompany the explanatory texts, yet, at one and the same time, open worlds before the reader, in which rules are broken and small and large wrongs are committed – as described in the plots of the stories.

The Ways of the Righteous meets all the demands of its readership by fulfilling all four primary functions in general, and specifically with the help of the embed-

25 William Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore* 67:266 (1954): 333–49.

ded tales – in proof of the blurred boundaries: between the study materials and the practical guidance; between recreational culture of amusement and escapism and the warning and threatening educational contents; between sermons intending to rekindle positive social values and antithetical folktales with boldly unconventional or dastardly plots.

Essentially, I am suggesting the thesis that *Musar* texts intentionally utilize blurred boundaries to expand their reading audiences.²⁶ *Musar* authors and compilers create blurring, that makes it easier for them to pass through the cracks of internal censorship, through the communal indications of what is forbidden and permitted, decent and indecent. Moreover, the text also blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction. Since the reader of *Musar* literature perceives the text to be like reality, her/she responds to it as being real by trying to refashion him/herself in accordance with the realistic text. This statement is granted theoretical support by Monroe Birdsley, who claimed that one of the components of the aesthetic experience is what he called “the intention toward the object”; that is, the reader’s readiness to be guided by the text.²⁷ In this manner, a didactic circle is formed between the reader and the text, in accordance with which the reader is fashioned while facing the text, while the text constructs and revitalizes the world of values that it presents; therefore, the *Musar* text is both a mirror and a design tool. Moreover, the four categories of the blurring of the boundaries I suggested above represent a worldview that easily accommodates and tolerates opposites, and are also components that subconsciously influence the readers. This understanding of ours, regarding the characteristics of the texts in *Musar* literature, enables the reconstruction of the worldviews of the original author and his authentic audience.

26 This idea also corroborated by the research of Claudia Rosenzweig-Kupfer in relation to the place of *Musar* books in Yiddish Jewish culture; see Rosenzweig, “Getlekhe un nisht getlekhe mayseyes: The Mayse-bukh and Its Readership,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 26.3 (2019): 203–23.

27 Monroe Birdsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958).

Anne L. Williams

Laughing at Death: Blurred Boundaries in Giotto's *Last Judgment*

Abstract: On the west wall of the Arena Chapel in Padua, Giotto's *Last Judgment* (ca. 1303-1305) features intriguing details: demons mimic angels and bureaucrats, a cleric bribes his superior, and an old lecher still attempts to buy sex despite his ongoing bodily torture. Traditionally understood as a manifestation of the artist's personal wit, I propose that these details reveal much more about their patron. Blurring the boundaries between pleasure and fear, they complicate the traditional separation of "profane" humor from sacred themes in fourteenth-century painting.

Keywords: Giotto, Arena Chapel, Last Judgment, Hell, Laughter, Humor

Studies of medieval affectivity often focus on the sorrow, tears, and fear elicited by depictions of death, disease, and suffering, particularly in the context of affective piety.¹ Yet an equally powerful phenomenon existed of laughter in response to such threats. One of the most famous examples, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350), responds to the 1348 pandemic and quarantine with comedy and parody that one imagines might have served a similar function to *Saturday Night Live*'s March 2021 skit, "Boomers Got the Vax." However, humor and fear intertwined as well in ecclesiastical visual culture; this article examines the particular case of the Last Judgment fresco on the west wall of the Arena Chapel of Padua, painted by Giotto di Bondone between 1303 and 1305 (fig. 1). Traditionally understood as a

1 Amy Neff, "The Pain of *Compassio*: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," *Art Bulletin* 80.2 (1998): 254–73; eadem, *A Soul's Journey: Franciscan Art, Theology, and Devotion in the Supplicationes variae*. Text Image Context: Studies in Medieval Manuscript Illumination, 6, Studies and Texts, 210 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019); Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Theresa Flanigan, "Likeness and Compassion in Franciscan Art: A Late Medieval Theory of Compassion and Naturalism in Frescoes in the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi," *Aesthetic Theology in the Franciscan Tradition: The Senses and the Experience of God in Art*, ed. Xavier Seubert and Oleg Bychov (New York: Routledge, 2020), 71–92; Jill Bennett, "Stigmata and Sense Memory: St. Francis and the Affective Image," *Art History* 24.1 (2001): 1–16; Chiara Frugoni, "Female Mystics, Visions, and Iconography," *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, trans. Margery J. Schneider. Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 130–64; *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012).

manifestation of Giotto's personal wit, the following proposes that the fresco's visual details reveal much more about its primary audience and about the salutary role of humor and pleasure in trecento Italy. Blurring superimposed boundaries between 'profane' humor and 'sacred' salvation, it will be argued that the chapel's visual wit enhanced its function as an *ex-voto*, or offering, intended to redeem its patron Enrico Scrovegni's sin of usury during a time when usurers were under particular attack in Padua.

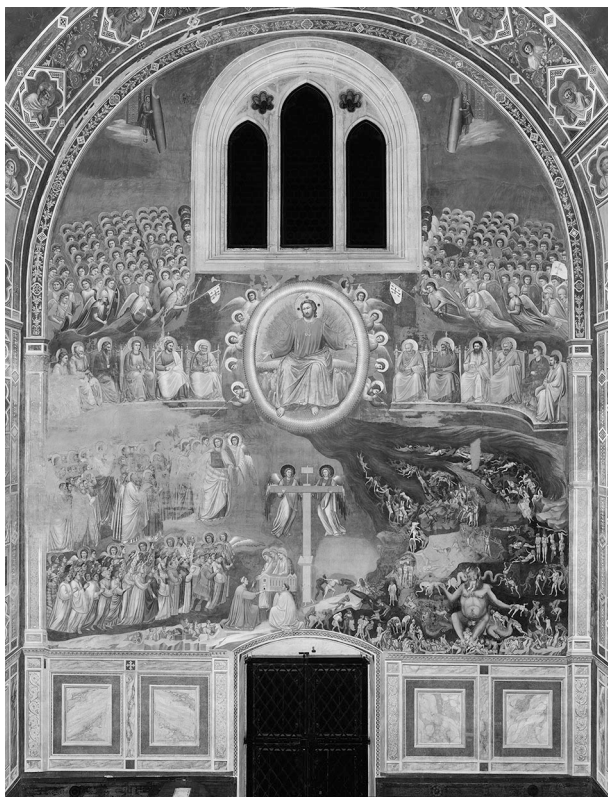


Fig. 1: Giotto di Bondone, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

In his seminal 1986 article, Andrew Ladis revealed the pervasive visual wit throughout the frescoes of the Arena Chapel.² Of the thirty-four biblical and apoc-

² Andrew Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit and the Arena Chapel," *Art Bulletin* 68.4 (1986): 581–96.

ryphal New Testament scenes painted on the chapel's north and south walls, at least fourteen contain identifiably humorous elements. Giotto's scenes move far beyond the simple presentation of events. In the Marriage of the Virgin (fig. 2), it's a shock to everyone that the ninety-year-old Joseph's rod is the one that has miraculously flowered, indicating his divine selection as the spouse of the youthful Mary and future stepfather of Jesus. As an expression of phallic fecundity that ironically foreshadows his cuckoldry by God the Father, the flowered rod's prominence amid the barren sticks of the surrounding, muttering youths amplified the situation's absurdity – an absurdity elucidated in a contemporary Italian play by Joseph's unsuccessful attempts to hide his rod, his embarrassment about being part of the group of youths, and his complaints about marrying a “girl.”³ Seeming on the verge of laughter, one of Giotto's youths moves to give Joseph a slap on the back, a comic ritual component of wedding customs in Italy.⁴ The humor of the scene is elucidated in a less subtle variation by Giotto's pupil, Taddeo Gaddi, in the Baroncelli Chapel of the Florentine Franciscan Church of Santa Croce (fig. 3; ca. 1330): Joseph's slap on the back turns nearly violent, a young man breaks his sterile rod in overt frustration, and another thwarted suitor carts in a girthy, foliated trunk to rival Joseph's more delicate stem.

Once legible, the pictorial wit of these stories is immediately charming to the modern eye. More surprising, perhaps, is its extension to the fresco of the Last Judgment on the west wall of the Arena Chapel, which includes a vision of Hellfire indebted to Romanesque scenes of the end of days intended to enflame the fearful pilgrim's eye and mind (fig. 4). Yet wit is omnipresent in Giotto's Hell through the devices of irony, mimicry, and parody. A grotesque caricature of the Just King of Kings supported by the winged vehicles of the Four Evangelists in his angel-rimmed mandorla of light, Hell's overlord sits enthroned in judgment upon a double-headed dragon (or reptilian monster) and a medley of devils and fallen souls. Arms outstretched in mimicry of Christ, he dispenses his justice not through angels, but through hairy demons who enthusiastically drag, flay, and cavort their way through Hell; a crowned ‘Prince of Hell’ figure between Satan's feet pulls his cheeks apart with his fingers in a presumably obscene gesture (echoing that of an earlier demon on the famous Ganymede capital at Vézelay) that lures the eye to-

3 Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis, *Il teatro abruzzese del medio evo*. Bibliotheca Dramatica, 4 (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1997), 64–65. For further examples of Joseph's comic characterizations in Italian drama, see the four Perugian liturgical dramas in: Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis, *Laude drammatiche e rappresentazione sacre* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1943), 1: 58–93.

4 Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 201.



Fig. 2: Giotto di Bondone, *Marriage of the Virgin*, 1303–1305, north wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

ward the horrors of the scene.⁵ Parodying Christ's angels above who trumpet the end of days, Hell's hairy stewards reply with their own trumpeting calls to the damned to join their rightful place (fig. 5). In an ironic attempt to escape his fate, one soul attempts to escape his fiery fate by hiding behind the wooden cross adjacent to the kneeling Scrovegni (fig. 6), an object he "doubtless never embraced so firmly in life."⁶

5 For the Ganymede demon's function, see Ilene H. Forsyth, "The Ganymede Capital at Vézelay," *Gesta* 15 (1976): 241–46; here 244. Moshe Barasch interpreted the crowned figure below Giotto's Satan as a sinner inflicting suffering upon himself. Moshe Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 5. Jérôme Baschet's interpretation of the gesture as an attention-getting device is probably more accurate. Jérôme Baschet, *Les justices de l'au-delà: les représentations de l'enfer en France et en Italie (XIIe-XVe siècle)* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1993), 225–26.

6 Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit" (see note 2), 586.

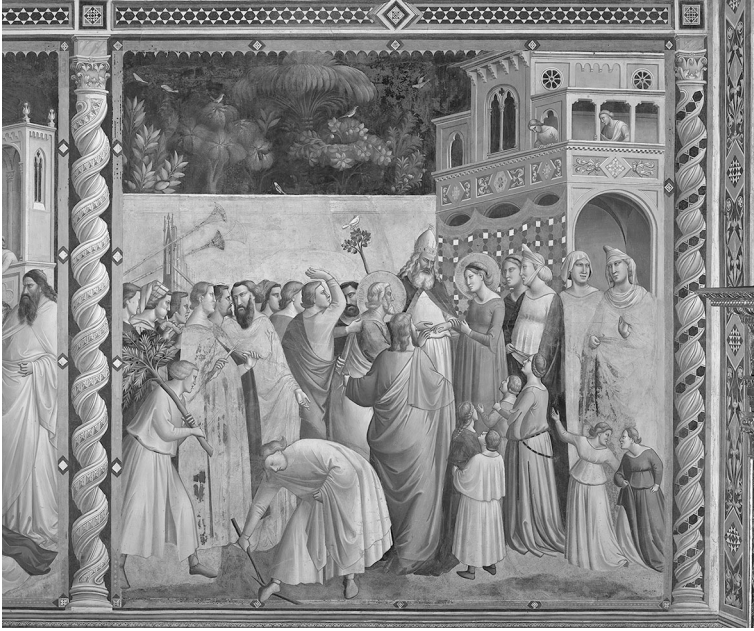


Fig. 3: Taddeo Gaddi, *Marriage of the Virgin*, ca. 1330, Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence (photo © Scala/Art Resource, NY)

Meanwhile, just to the left of the cross, Enrico offers a model of the Arena Chapel to three figures identified as the Virgin, Catherine of Alexandria, and John the Evangelist (fig. 1).⁷ The figure supporting the model is often identified as the chapel's primary outside advisor, potentially Altegrado Cattaneo di Lendinara (d. 1314), who held the post of archpriest of the cathedral of Padua between 1301 and 1304.⁸ His back turned against Hell and his foot abutting the leftmost hairy devil, the tonsured figure offers a visual and spiritual buffer against the infernal dangers. Yet his voluminous white habit and dark brown tonsure find their visual counterparts in an isolated spectacle just to the right of the cross, inviting the eye to roam: vigorously fighting against the hairy brown demons who attempt to strip him of his white tunic, his head enshrouded, a half-naked sinner hides from God and his inescapable torture unquestionably arising from the "enormity of his sin,"⁹ an inver-

7 The precise identity of the three figures has been debated. See, especially Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 4, n. 9.

8 Derbes and Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart* (see note 7), 24–25, nn. 63–64.

9 Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit" (see note 2), 586.



Fig. 4: Giotto di Bondone, Hell, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

sion of the bareheaded, enveloped cleric (fig. 6). Immediately below, enormous sack hoisted across his shoulder, another more materialistic figure traipses willingly toward his fate, lured by a rather convincing demonic bureaucrat with papers in hand, potentially the recording demon Tutivillus – a promise that you *can* take it with you after all.¹⁰ Meanwhile, in the depths of Hell, an old lecher still attempts to buy sex from a young prostitute, completely oblivious to the demon trying to flay

¹⁰ For Tutivillus, see Peter Halm, “Der schreibende Teufel,” *Cristianesimo e ragion di stato. L’umanesimo e il demoniaco nell’arte. Atti del Ilo congress Internazionale di Studi Umanistici*, ed. Enrico Castelli (Rome and Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1953), 235–49.

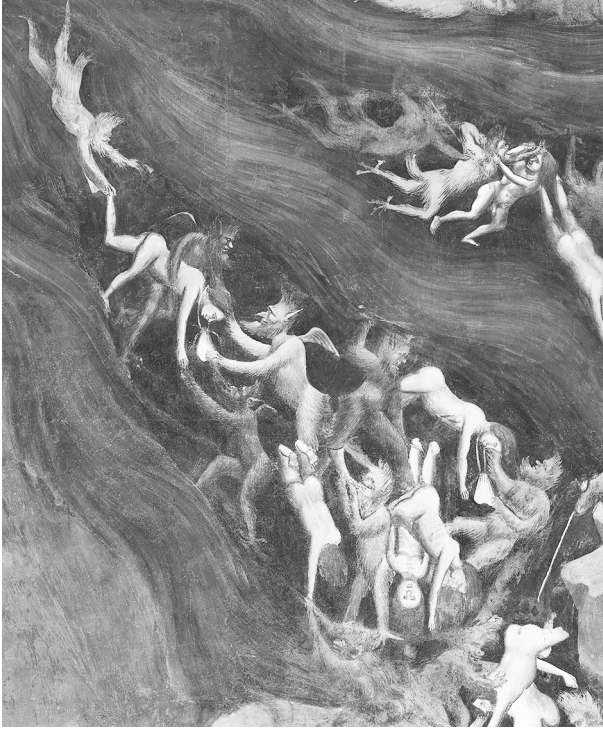


Fig. 5: Giotto di Bondone, detail of trumpeting demon and demons pulling the damned into hell by their purse strings, *Last Judgment*, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

him (fig. 7), while a friar kneels piously before his superior, a bishop still wearing his miter, who receives his cherished moneybag while enthroned upon his demon *cathedra* (fig. 8). Even the man being swallowed by the dragon seems to find this notable! While a medley of sins proliferates here, moneybags predominate; damned souls with bags around their neck hurtle toward Hell with the enthusiastic assistance of demons who pull their purse strings (fig. 5).

That a trecento audience could find such scenes amusing is substantiated partially by satires of papal and clerical avarice that were widespread in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. So-called money-*centos*, satirical collections of Latin verses written by and for clerics, satirize the curia's conduct by mimicking biblical passages and document growing worries among reform-minded clergy about the papacy's increasing reliance upon fundraising. The Money-Gospel was the most popular genre of *cento*; most versions include the story of a poor cleric who is turned away from the curia's door because of his poverty, while a wealthy



Fig. 6: Giotto di Bondone, detail of Enrico Scrovegni and damned soul hiding behind the cross, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

and simoniacal bishop gains immediate entrance by lavishly bestowing gifts. Clerical greed is reiterated through the Money-Gospel's use of wordplay, such as the replacement of *cardinales*, or cardinals, with *carpinales*, meaning graspers. Less sophisticated versions of these money satires were apparently so common that some have suggested their execution was a frequent exercise for schoolboys.¹¹

¹¹ Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 135–42, 154, 176; John A. Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Meed: The Development of Mediaeval Venality Satire* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 183–84; Laura Kendrick, “Medieval Satire,” *A Companion to Satire: Ancient to Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA, Oxford, et al.: Blackwell, 2007), 52–60; here 55–58. See also John A. Yunck, “Economic Conservatism, Papal Finance, and the Medieval Satires on Rome,” *Mediaeval Studies* 23 (1961): 334–51; Rodney M. Thomson, “The Origins of Latin Satire in Twelfth Century Europe,” *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 13 (1978): 73–83. For anger elicited particularly against decadent and sinful clergy, see André Vauchez, *Les Hérétiques au moyen âge: Suppôts de Satan ou chrétiens dissidents?* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2014), 97. Padua had its own share of avaricious friars and clergymen, as detailed by Brendan Cassidy, but the popularity of clerical literature satirizing sinful clergymen complicates the suggestion that “a permanent record of clerical inadequacy on the walls of a church would scarcely have been welcomed” by clerics. Brendan Cassidy, “Laughing with Giotto at Sinners in



Fig. 7: Giotto di Bondone, detail of old man buying sex, *Last Judgment*, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

Wit also extends to Giotto's depiction of the vices, as in his barefoot, club-wielding, clown-like *Stultitia* (Folly) on the lower part of the of the chapel's north wall. Although he wears a crown of feathers and a bird-like train of rags, the stones encircling his belt prohibit flight as he stretches futilely to the heavens. As Ladis noted, a trecento audience felt little guilt about such condemnatory, superior laughter, for *Stultitia's* external characteristics expressed interior nature.¹² This is substantiated by the *beffe*, or practical jokes, of the *Decameron*, which frequently reveal "a cruel malice even when laughter is the ostensible aim . . . as [the pranksters] shame and scapegoat an outsider; they reinforce their collective identity and strengthen the codes that they share for judging others."¹³ Thus, Scrovegni could laugh at the folly of the shortsighted, jug-like, gluttonous steward who guzzles

Hell," *Viator* 35 (2004): 355–86; here 371. This interpretation also overlooks the dominant presence of a cleric, probably the cycle's advisor, just to the left of Giotto's Hell and next to Enrico Scrovegni.
 12 Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit" (see note 2), 584.

13 William Robins, "Introduction," *The Decameron Eighth Day in Perspective*, ed. William Robins. The *Lectura Bocacci*, 8 (Toronto, Buffalo, NY, et al.: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 3–19; here 4.

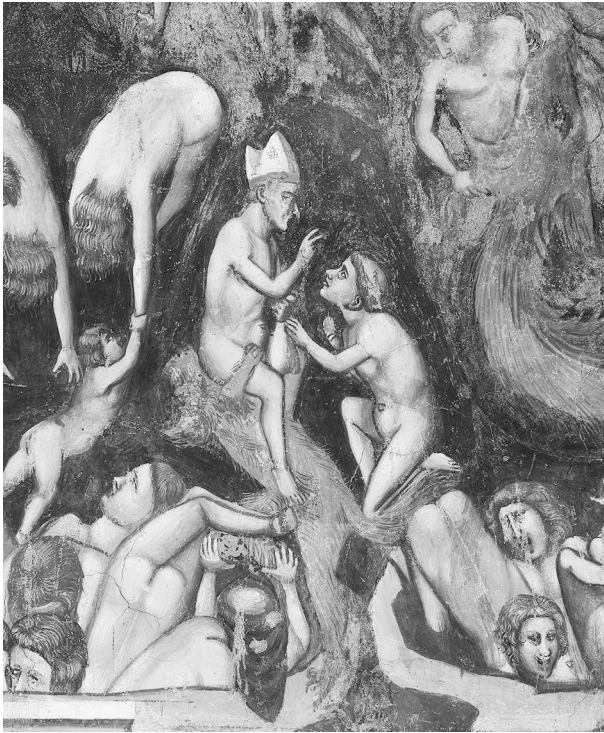


Fig. 8: Giotto di Bondone, detail of bishop and friar exchanging money in Hell, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

the wine before the actual wedding party in the Wedding Feast at Cana, for he serves as a foil to the worthy, obedient servant who is rewarded with Jesus's blessing in the same scene.

As Élyse Dupras and Marla Carlson demonstrate, something close to *Schadenfreude* manifested in an extensive literary and dramatic tradition of taking pleasure in the suffering of others, particularly in medieval representations of Hell, a form of catharsis experienced through the “purgation of the fear, the anguish, in the face of the threat that the other represents.”¹⁴ According to Giovanni Villani's *Nuova Cronica* (written 1300–1346), on May Day in 1304 the Ponte alla Carraia of

¹⁴ Élyse Dupras, “Hell: The Pleasure of the Suffering of Others,” *Pleasure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Naama Cohen-Hanegbi and Piroska Nagy. International Medieval Research, 24 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 249–80; here 252; Marla Carlson, *Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-modern Martyrs, Mystics and Artists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 41.

Florence was transformed into a life-size recreation of Hell with demons and tortured souls, which the author described as a “giuoco da beffe” (literally a game or play of jokes).¹⁵ Antonio Pucci's poetic translation of Villani's work, the *Centiloquio* (1373), states that people wept and laughed (“chi piangeva di quello, e chi ridea”), a notion supported by Adriano Magli, who argues that devils performed comic roles in medieval Italian drama.¹⁶ Various motifs in Giotto's Hell, including the skewering of sodomites, accord with representations of Hell in thirteenth-century Italian *laude*.¹⁷ Thirteenth-century literary visions of Hell, such as Vincent of Beauvais's 1263 *Speculum historiale* (based on the widely adapted and translated 1149 *Vision of Tnugdal*), linger on demonic torments by monsters who devour sinners and subsequently birth them or excrete them, as visualized by Giotto's Satan, whose bloated belly deviates from preceding visual representations. The torments that occur in the belly of the monster and the cycle of devouring and parturition are linked to the sin of lust and abnormal sexuality and copulation; these sinners are considered enemies of their community as purveyors of disorder, and as Dupras suggests, the writer's and reader's pleasure in contemplating their demise is evident in the long and detailed descriptions of such torments – a level of detail analogous to that of the Arena Chapel's Hell.

Yet the pleasure elicited through righteous torment is followed by a new kind of pleasure evoked by subsequent descriptions of the delights of Heaven, from which the Elect can witness the torments of Hell, notably without compassion; this view of the other's torture constitutes one of the pleasures of Paradise. With respect to the suffering of evil or damned characters in medieval Passion and hagiographical plays, it is even possible that pleasure was conceptualized as

15 *Cronica di Giovanni Villani*, ed. Francesco Gherardi Dragomanni (Florence: Sansone Coen, 1845), 2:89.

16 Adriano Magli, “La lauda drammatica e la funzione dei diavoli,” *Atti del IV Colloquio della Società internazionale pour l'étude du théâtre medieval*, Viterbo, 10–15 luglio 1983, ed. Maria Chiabò, Federico Doglio, and Marina Maymone Siniscalchi (Viterbo: Centro studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale, 1984), 215–33. See also Paolo Toschi, *Le origini del teatro italiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1955), 205–07, 218–21; Alessandro D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano* (Turin: Loescher, 1891), 1: 94–97, 101–03, and 527–35; Giuseppe Cocchiara, *Il diavolo nella tradizione popolare italiana: saggi e ricerche*, Studi di tradizioni popolari 3 (Palermo: G. B. Palumbo, 1945), 57–72; Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 14 (1977; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 104–52, 176–210; Anna Cornagliotti, “I diavoli nel teatro italiano dalle origini al XVI secolo,” *Convegno di studi diavoli e mostri in scena dal medio evo al Rinascimento*, ed. Maria Chiabò and Federico Doglio (Viterbo: Centro studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale, 1989), 97–168; Ladis, “The Legend of Giotto's Wit” (see note 2), 588.

17 Moshé Lazar, “L'enfer et les diables dans le theatre medieval Italian,” *Studi di folologia romanza offerti a Silvio Pellegrini* (Padua: Liviana editrice, 1971), 233–49; here 246.

a pious reaction.¹⁸ The pictorial wit in Giotto's other scenes of the ancestry and life of Christ on the north and south walls of the chapel may have offered a similar variety of potential pleasurable responses, carrying the potential for devotional multivalence.¹⁹

For Ladis, the Arena Chapel's visual wit bore witness to Giotto's legendary artistic personality as the generator of Renaissance painting, a concept developed by the early critic Giorgio Vasari (1550).²⁰ Ladis conceptualized Giotto's wit as a product of nascent Renaissance humanist pursuits, entirely in line with the classical *topos* of the witty artist, based on descriptions of Giotto's personality in Boccaccio's 1350 *Decameron* and Franco Sacchetti's 1390 *Trecentonovelle*, both examples of comic literature influenced by classical literary precedents.²¹ Yet a similar use of Hellish wit appears much earlier in a Romanesque scene of the Last Judgment: on the west tympanum of the Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy in Conques, executed during the first half of the twelfth century, a poacher receives his just desserts by being spit-roasted by the very rabbits he demonized in life.²² The nature of Giotto's widespread mockery and its particular focus on monetary exchange suggests its use served a particular function beyond personal fancy.

In 1300, the banker Enrico Scrovegni renounced the practice of usury, or moneylending with interest, an act probably inspired by the jubilee of that same year proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303). To begin his process of expiation Scrovegni immediately bought land for a new chapel to be dedicated to the Virgin

18 Dupras, "Hell" (see note 14), 255–57. For the pious *Schadenfreude* theory, see Hans-Jürgen Diller, "Laughter in Medieval English Drama: A Critique of Modernizing and Historical Analyses," *Comparative Drama* 36.1 (2002): 1–19; here 5.

19 The pictorial wit of the north and south walls of the Arena Chapel and its relationship to period rhetoric is discussed in Anne L. Williams, "*Imago humilis*: Humor, Irony, and the Rhetorical Wit of the Sacred in the Arena Chapel, Padua," *Gesta* 61.1 (2022): 57–80.

20 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, ed. Philip Jacks (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), 31–53.

21 According to Ladis, humor "bears witness to a side of Giotto's artistic personality that resembles the legendary figure developed in the writings of Boccaccio, Sacchetti, and Vasari." Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit" (see note 2), 583.

22 Baschet, *Les justices de l'au-delà* (see note 5), 146–63. Following Ladis, Cassidy argues that Giotto's wit deviates from the chapel's expiatory function. For example, he suggests that the relegation of sinful priests to hell, some of which have black habits, constituted a personal jest against Augustinian hermits who had complained about the size and magnificence of the new chapel. While unquestionably fruitful, this focus on the personal wit of the master painter overlooks the primary audience and motivation for such hellish painterly ingenuity: the patron. Cassidy, "Laughing with Giotto" (see note 11), 355–86.

of Charity.²³ Although it functioned primarily as his private palace chapel, a papal bull secured in 1304 granted indulgences to visitors to the chapel on each Marian feast day and during the week following it.²⁴ The Arena Chapel's commissioning therefore functioned as a kind of *ex-voto* intended to counterbalance Scrovegni's mortal sin and that of his usurious father, Reginaldo. In the *Divine Comedy*, written between 1308 and 1320, Dante Alighieri consigns Reginaldo and his purse to the inner ring of the Seventh Circle of Hell, a place of raining fire, burning soil, and endless tears and melancholy, the realm of usurers and sodomites; Dante's usurers wear moneybags around their necks, as do many in Giotto's Hell, a practice in keeping with thirteenth-century Paduan statues, which dictate that usurers should be placed in stocks with moneybags around their necks.²⁵ At the turn of the century, usury and usurers were under particular attack in Padua. A group of usurers lost their lives to an angry mob in the early fourteenth century, and according to local legend, in 1290, the Scrovegni palazzo was sacked and burned to the ground. Thirteenth-century Paduan chronicles and sermons, including those of Anthony of Padua (d. 1231), demonstrate a widespread thirteenth-century preoccupation with the sin and with families who had accrued their wealth through its practice.²⁶

The chapel's unusual focus on Judas foregrounds the chapel's function as an *ex-voto* intended to redeem Scrovegni's mortal sin. As Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona have emphasized, the Arena Chapel's entire program is structured around the idea of usury as a "sin against nature" and its opposite in the form of the Virgin's charity. Christened Santa Maria della Carità, the chapel presents a systematic program of symmetrical, fundamentally oppositional figures and meanings, such as the unusual pairing of Judas's pact to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver

23 John Kenneth Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 181–83; Roberto Cessi, "La condizione degli ebrei banchieri in Padova nel secolo XIV," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* 6 (1907): 201–13, repr. in *Padova medievale: studi e documenti*, ed. Donato Gailo (Padua: Edizioni Erredici, 1985), 1: 319–36; Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, "Reading the Arena Chapel," *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, ed. Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 197–220; here 200–01, n. 12.

24 Benjamin G. Kohl, "Giotto and His Lay Patrons," *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, ed. Derbes and Sandona. Cambridge Companions to the History of Art (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176–96; here 183–84.

25 Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto XVII, line 64; *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine. Cantica I: Hell (L'Inferno)*, Dorothy L. Sayers, trans. (1949; repr., Harmondsworth, Baltimore, MD, et al.: Penguin Books, 1972), 176; *Statuta Patavina*, ed. Bartolomeo Abborario (Venice: Per Guilielmum de Fontaneto Montisferrati, 1528), rubrica decimaquarta, fol. XI, verso; Derbes and Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart* (see note 7), 36, 52, and n. 142.

26 Kohl, "Giotto and His Lay Patrons" (see note 24), 180; Silvana Collodo, *Una società in trasformazione: Padova tra XI e XV secolo*. Miscellanea erudite, 49 (Padua: Antenore, 1990), 72.

with the pregnant Mary's and Elizabeth's *Visitation* as pendants below the *Annunciation* on the east chancel arch (fig. 9). This pairing flanks the altar and therefore constitutes the most visually significant component of the sacred space. It is here that Judas's associations with Avarice – and by extension Enrico Scrovegni's need to expiate for his own sin – are paired with and fulfilled by the Visitation's affiliations with the virtue of Charity; Mary's freely-offered ministry to her cousin contrasts sharply with Judas's sale of his services to the high priests. The Virtues located on the lower level of the north wall and the Vices in the corresponding position on the south wall likewise reinforce the program of juxtapositions. Derbes and Sandona attributed these contrasts to the use of rhetorical *oppositio*, a technique grounded in Aristotelian, Ciceronian, and Augustinian oppositional contrast propagated by the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) and particularly by the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure (d. 1274), who frequently harnessed the Aristotelian notion that “everything seems to assert its identity more forcibly when juxtaposed with its opposite.”²⁷

Directly across from Judas's bribe on the northeast of the chancel arch is the Hell scene on the northwest section of the west wall, which forms its own visual pendant to the bribe, and delineates the consequences of such avarice. Enrico's offering of a model of the Arena Chapel to the Virgin of Charity therefore forms a significant visual parallel to the clerical bribe between the genuflecting friar and enthroned bishop occurring across the painted partition, as well as the monetary exchange for sex to Satan's left; these offerings, in turn, parallel that of Judas across the chapel, completing a triangulation that evokes a satire of simony, a corrupt bribery, and an equally earnest pious offering. The consequence of Judas's bribery on the chancel arch is also rendered visible in the Last Judgment, where Judas is shown hanging next to three other figures identified as usurers by their moneybags (fig. 10). While commerce relates more obviously to Scrovegni's usury, Giotto's references to sins associated with lust and sexual deviance are also directly relevant. The concept of money as inherently sterile and usury as its unnatural reproduction through interest is rooted in Aristotle, whose *Politics* was translated into Latin in the mid-thirteenth century and advanced in Scholastic thought; Albertus Magnus (d. 1280) and Thomas Aquinas both adopted the Aristo-

27 Bonaventure, *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae . . . Opera omnia*, ed. PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura (Quaracchi: Collegio S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902), 9: 306; 1: 495, 831, 833; 2: 428, 1002; 6: 86, 221; Derbes and Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart* (see note 7), 11–12, nn. 31–33; Eleonora M. Beck, *Giotto's Harmony: Music and Art in Padua at the Crossroads of the Renaissance* (Florence: European Press Academic Publishing, 2005), 64–67; Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978); George H. Tavard, “The Coincidence of Opposites: A Recent Interpretation of Bonaventure,” *Theological Studies* 41.3 (1980): 576–84.



Fig. 9: Giotto di Bondone, east chancel arch, Arena Chapel, 1303–1305, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

telian notion.²⁸ Writing during Giotto's time at the Arena Chapel, the Franciscan Alexander Bonini (d. 1314) underscored usury's relations to impregnation and birth, while the Dominican theologian Remigio dei Girolami (d. 1319) compared it with sodomy in his treatise on the topic.²⁹ Various thirteenth-century theolo-

²⁸ Terence P. McLaughlin, "The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury (XII, XIII, and XIV Centuries)," *Medieval Studies* 1 (1939): 81–147; John T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 45–46.

²⁹ For Bonini, see Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis* (see note 28), 63–64 and Odd Langholm, *Economics in the Medieval Schools: Wealth, Exchange, Value, Money, and Usury According to the Paris Theological Tradition, 1200–1350* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 430–46. For Remigio, see Langholm, *Economics*, 464, n. 71. See also Ovidio Capitani, "Il 'De Peccato Usure' di Remigio dei Girolami,"

gians, including Thomas of Chobham (d. 1230s), also associated usury with prostitution.³⁰ As Derbes and Sandona note, “it is difficult to call to mind a precedent hell scene in Italy with such an emphasis on the lustful,” with such striking attention to torments rendered against genitalia; monetary exchange and sexual sins are inextricably bound, even in the exchange between bishop and friar, where the money-bag’s positioning at waist-level and two protruding bulges evoke the potential of a homosexual exchange occurring as well.³¹

For Enrico, therefore, the chapel’s Hell probably manifested real fears of contamination by sin, disease, and that ultimate death consigned to the damned at the end of days. Yet its wit perhaps also offered a bodily means of resolving these fears through the pleasure and laughter induced in the viewer. Ridicule of the devil was a common means of controlling him, evident in his comic depictions in drama and poetry, including the Franciscan Giacomino da Verona’s *Babilonia infernale* (ca. 1275); the quarrelling demons of cantos 21 and 22 of Dante’s *Inferno* also take on a comic bent, not least when one of them lets out a trumpeting fart.³² Meanwhile, in *Paradise*, reflection by the blessed on a sinful life once lived does not involve repentance or grieving but a “smile” or a “laugh” – *Non però qui si pente, ma si ride, / non de la colpa, ch’a mente non torna, / ma del valor ch’ordinò e provide* (9.103–05) are the words used by Folco of Marseilles (“Yet does not repent here; here one smiles / not for the fault, which we do not recall, / but for the Power that fashioned and foresaw”).³³ The complexities of understanding trecento manifestations of pleasure through laughter and smiling are complicated further by linguistics; while Hebrew and Greek both had distinct words for malicious laughter and for happy laughter, Latin only had one word for laughter, *risus*, probably until

Studi medievali, 3rd ser., 6, no. 6 (1965): 536–662; here 611–13. As Derbes and Sandona note, Padua was a major center of Aristotelianism and the works of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonini were well represented in the Biblioteca Antoniana. Derbes and Sandona, *The Usurer’s Heart* (see note 7), 59–61.

30 Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, 509; quoted in Jacques Le Goff, “The Usurer and Purgatory,” *The Dawn of Modern Banking* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 35; Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (1986; New York: Zone Books, 1990), 50.

31 Derbes and Sandona, *The Usurer’s Heart* (see note 7), 66.

32 Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XXI, line 139; Sayers, trans., *Cantica I: Hell (L’Inferno)* (see note 25), 205; Nino Borsellino, “Ludi demoniaci della *Divina Commedia*,” *Convengo di studi diavoli e mostri in scena dal medio evo al Rinascimento*, ed. Maria Chiabò and Federico Doglio (Viterbo: Centro studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale, 1989), 81–95.

33 Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto IXX, lines 103–05, quoted in Peter S. Hawkins, “All Smiles: Poetry and Theology in Dante,” *PMLA* 121.2 (2006): 371–87; here 375. Hawkins chooses to translate *ride* as “smiles” here, but it could also mean “laughs.”

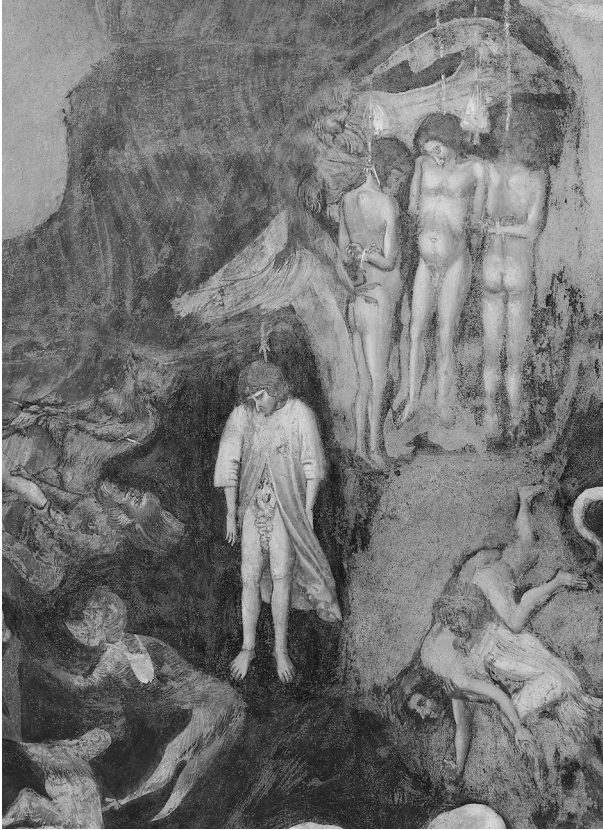


Fig. 10: Giotto di Bondone, detail of Judas hanging below three hanging usurers, *Last Judgment*, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

the twelfth century, when the term *subrisus* appears. Dante uses the words *sorriso* or *sorridere* and *riso* or *ridere* interchangeably, over seventy times.³⁴

³⁴ Hawkins, “All Smiles” (see note 33), 378. Jacques Le Goff suggests that *subrisus* probably only came to mean ‘smiling’ in the twelfth century. Jacques Le Goff, “Laughter in the Middle Ages,” *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1997), 40–53; here 48. *Sorridere* comes from the Latin *subridere*, or *subrisus*, which means a “suppressed or muffled laugh, even a ‘little laugh.’” Mary Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, et al.: University of California Press, 2015), 75.

For many modern audiences, laughter in response to fears of death, disease, and social infection is a familiar and fundamental means of psychological coping. For Freud, laughter results from disguised unconscious aggression and the release of repressed, nervous energy, and the joke from the conscience allowing thoughts to be expressed that normally would be suppressed by society; this release of nervous energy is commonly associated with the relief theory, pioneered by Herbert Spencer, but Freud's conception of laughter directed toward another is equally indebted to Thomas Hobbes's theory of humor as an assertion of superiority.³⁵ In his early hagiographies, Francis of Assisi and his followers reportedly laughed at the thought of their own impending deaths, an act perhaps demonstrating the applicability of the relief theory to the thirteenth century.³⁶ With respect to the ethical implications of *risus*, Robert Grosseteste's Latin translation of the *Nichomachean Ethics* made Aristotle's concept of acceptable jesting accessible in the thirteenth century. It also inspired commentaries by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas that delineated acceptable forms of joviality and laughter as legitimate and virtuous. But the notion of virtuous pleasure was also available throughout the Middle Ages via Cicero's *On Duties*, which inspired recreational concepts of pleasure as a physiological necessity; in other words, pleasure was considered ethical in that it ultimately encouraged more productivity.³⁷

35 Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. James Strachey and Angela Richards, trans. James Strachey. The Penguin Freud Library, 6 (London: Penguin, 1966); Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 3, 94–95.

36 These are just two of the three major approaches, including Francis Hutcheson's incongruity theory, that have defined the study of humor since the sixteenth century and that have more recently been mixed. John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 1–23; Critchley, *On Humour* (see note 35), 3. For an extensive discussion of the nature of medieval and early modern laughter, see Albrecht Classen, "Laughter as an Expression of Human Nature in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period: Literary, Historical, Theological, Philosophical, and Psychological Reflections. Also, an Introduction," *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1–140. Laughter is also a manifestation of Francis of Assisi's sainthood; he tells his brothers, "In tribulations, in the presence of those who torment you, always remain *hilari vultu*." Le Goff, "Laughter in the Middle Ages" (see note 34), 51; Peter J.A. Jones, "Humility & Humiliation: The Transformation of Franciscan Humour, ca. 1210–1310," *Cultural and Social History* (2018): 1–21; here 2. DOI: 10.1080/14780038.2018.1427359.

37 Glending Olson, "The Profits of Pleasure," *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson. The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, 2 (Cambridge, New York, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2005; paperback ed. 2009), 275–87; here 282. On pleasure, see also *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Toys, Games, and*

Trecento *risus* also appears to have served therapeutic purposes according to popular and formal physiology. While the body's temperament varied based on elements like the seasons and astrological configurations, individuals could maintain equilibrium by adjusting the so-called Galenic six non-naturals: air, food and drink, exercise and rest, sleep and waking, repletion and excretion of the humors, and the "accidents of the soul," which refer to the passions and emotions.³⁸ According to the popular thirteenth-century *Tacuinum sanitatis*, this maintenance included the moderation of joy, anger, fear, and distress.³⁹ A number of health regimens could be undertaken to ward off the dangers of fear, sorrow, and anger in order to attain the most desirable disposition, described as a "moderate cheerfulness."⁴⁰ According to Avicenna, melancholy and laughter are both associated with the spleen, which is governed by Saturn; melancholy could therefore be cured through laughter, but also through music, which was tied to Venus, Saturn's humoral opposite.⁴¹ Taking pleasure in the experience of performances of music, poetry, and tales – in other words, the experience of *delectatio* or delight – could promote good health, relieving anger, sadness, and anguish, purifying the blood, and encouraging digestion and untroubled sleep. In other words, pleasure and laughter were, as now, considered medicinal. For example, in his *Summa confessorum*, the theologian Thomas of Chobham discusses the merits of different kinds of entertainers, noting that the worthiest "bring solace to people in their illnesses or in their mental discomfort."⁴² Hugh of St. Victor denotes *theatrica*, or theatrics, as the seventh mechanical art; he calls this a *scientia ludorum*, or science of play, which reinvigorates "the mind through pleasure."⁴³ As Glending Olson points out, these are physiolog-

Entertainment, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 23 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019).

38 Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 101.

39 Luisa Cogliati Arano, *The Medieval Health Handbook: Tacuinum sanitatis*, trans. Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook (New York: George Braziller, 1976), 6.

40 Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 39–64, 77–83.

41 Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, New Edition, ed. Philippe Despoix and Georges Leroux (Montreal, Kingston, et al.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 89; Laurinda Dixon, "Music, Medicine, and Morals," *Studies in Iconography* 8 (1982): 147–56; here 148; Theresa Flanigan, "Mona Lisa's Smile: Interpreting Emotion in Renaissance Female Portraits," *Studies in Iconography* 40 (2019): 183–230; here 200.

42 Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, 291–93, quoted in Olson, "The Profits of Pleasure" (see note 37), 276.

43 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, quoted in Olson, "The Profits of Pleasure" (see note 37), 278.

ical benefits, *not* didactic benefits, which we often assume were the only morally excusable explanation for medieval pleasure in the entertaining.⁴⁴

Although accessible to the eyes of pilgrims and the larger public four times a year, the Arena Chapel cycle's wit is not fully explained as a tool for re-stating the major themes and rendering them more readily comprehensible to the viewer. The chapel's primary audience consisted of Enrico's family, the occupants of the adjacent palace, as well as occasional guests of the Scrovegni who came from the upper echelons of the commune and the Veneto. When Giotto's parodies relate to Christian doctrine or morality, they play upon themes that were already well known by even the most uneducated of audiences. Furthermore, recent analyses of the chapel substantiate the notion of a sophisticated audience capable of reading the entire pictorial program comparatively and with a certain level of doctrinal literacy.⁴⁵ It is far more likely that wit and fear intertwine in Giotto's scenes to perform benefits akin to those described by Thomas and Hugh of St. Victor, although their observations address the performative arts of music, dance, and storytelling, like the aforementioned Ponte alla Carraia drama, not the visual arts explicitly. The act of painting itself was not performative, but Giotto probably intended his finished product to inspire *delectatio* or pleasure on a regular basis.

Yet the smile or laugh elicited by pictorial wit in Giotto's Hell is simultaneously one of relief, restoration, and superiority. Period ethical and physiological theories suggest that laughing at sin and death likely served a purpose for Scrovegni – one that was restorative in the face of his own mortal sin. This notion of smiling and laughter as salutary in response to fears of death both precedes and underpins a phenomenon that manifests in the 1350 *Decameron*: Boccaccio's ten young men and women who flee Florence for the countryside enact many of the recommendations made by contemporary plague tracts. Physicians advised quarantine away from the infected area, but also cheerfulness as the best disposition for warding off the plague. The reading of the *Decameron* itself contained such benefits; in the preface to his French translation of the *Decameron*, Laurent de Premierfait notes that the work will strengthen the spirits and therefore lengthen one's life. Boccaccio's "immediate purpose was the 'confort et soulaz' of the survivors of the plague, deeply saddened by the loss of friends and relatives and still fearful of death."⁴⁶

While Giotto's pictorial wit is unquestionably innovative, his visual parodies, satire, and irony are pointed frequently against sins for which Scrovegni and his

⁴⁴ Olson, "The Profits of Pleasure" (see note 37), 276.

⁴⁵ Derbes and Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart* (see note 7), 6, 145–46.

⁴⁶ Olson, "Profits of Pleasure" (see note 37), 280.

family were well known, highlighting particularly the lust for money. The proliferation of moneybags is unusual for duecento and early trecento Italian art. Despite the fresco cycle's emphasis on the dangers of avarice, this personified vice does not appear as is customary; instead, it is everywhere. Envy (*Invidia*) on the north wall clutches a moneybag in her left hand, in imitation of Judas, as flames consume her, while Charity (*Caritas*), her counterpart on the south wall, stands on top of a pile of moneybags, an unusual addition to her iconography indicative of a particularly pointed path to salvation.⁴⁷ Far more than simple instructional tools or testaments to the artist's personality, Giotto's witty details manifest Scrovegni's fears of contamination – specifically by the sin and social death just across the painted cross partitioning him from Hell – while offering a means of restoring this boundary through distancing, restorative, relieving laughter.

Scholarship on late medieval devotional and ecclesiastical art has often cast “low,” “secular” humor as the antithesis to “high” veneration and theology, a dichotomy rooted partially in Bakhtinian partitionings of “folk” humor from “official,” serious, ecclesiastical culture,⁴⁸ in the Arena Chapel, visual conventions are understood to differentiate two opposing schemes, “the high from the low, the serious from the comic.”⁴⁹ Outside of the margins of manuscripts, cloisters, and cathedrals, parodies “in the sphere of the central images of Christianity,” such as depictions of biblical events or characters, are often overlooked.⁵⁰ Alternatively, their humor is acknowledged as a kind of excusable offense, present in order to communicate basic doctrine to a lay populace unfamiliar with Christian beliefs.⁵¹ Yet Giotto's wit fits firmly outside of these paradigms; it is neither antithetical to the chapel's ‘serious’ theological focus on charity and its expiatory func-

47 Selma Pfeiffenberger, “The Iconology of Giotto's Virtues and Vices,” Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA, 1966, 2:2:6.

48 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (1965; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 7, 96; Aron Gurevich, “Bakhtin and His Theory of Carnival,” *A Cultural History of Humour* (see note 34), 54–60; here 57.

49 “The centre is reserved for the sacred and the noble, and into the margins are banished the profane, the evil, and the ugly with a concomitant reduction in size and material splendor.” Cassidy, “Laughing with Giotto” (see note 11), 364.

50 Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice, and the Decorated Style 1290–1350* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 292. For example, depictions of St. Joseph are sometimes cleansed of their humor to become more palatable to the modern eye – a phenomenon precipitated by the Reformation and the concomitant subversiveness of mocking Catholic saints. This issue is discussed in Anne L. Williams, *Satire, Veneration, and St. Joseph in Art, c. 1300–1550*. Visual and Material Culture, 1300–1700, 16 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 15–29.

51 Francesca Alberti, “‘Divine Cuckolds’: Joseph and Vulcan in Renaissance Art and Literature,” *Cuckoldry Impotence and Adultery in Europe (15th–17th century)*, ed. Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 149–82; here 161.

tion, nor is it educational. Rather, it blurs the boundaries between pleasure and fear, and complicates the traditional partitioning of 'profane' humor from sacred themes in ecclesiastical painting.

Avia Shemesh

The Popular in Service of the Sacred: The Sculpted Musicians of Santiago de Compostela

Abstract: This article explores the complex sculpted program in the refectory of the Archbishop's Palace in Santiago de Compostela and the sculpted musicians of the western portal of Santiago de Compostela Cathedral. I describe multiple images of a courtly banquet complete with food service, dining, and entertainment, including figures of musicians, who were generally present at such feasts. Symbolic scenes were incorporated with these commonplace elements to create a dual interpretation of the scene as a parallel representation of earthly and heavenly banquets. Through the figures of the musicians, questions of musical iconography and its meaning come to light, alongside a clear reflection of the relationship between patrons and audiences.

Keywords: musical iconography; sculpted program; romanesque art; *Codex calixtinus*; elders of the Apocalypse

For the modern observer, medieval art can seem like a puzzling mixture of elements from separate, even opposite realms; sacred and secular, religious and profane, liturgical and popular seem to bleed into each other constantly. This intermingling is especially striking with monumental art, which by nature addressed diverse audiences. These porous boundaries were significant in the visual language of religious art, connecting patrons and their messages with their audiences, also observable in sermons, para-liturgical ceremonies, music, architecture, and portable art.¹

1 There are many documented and researched instances where sacred and popular cultures were used together for greater affective impact. Pedro Luis Huerta Huerta, "Entre el pecado y la diversión: las representaciones juglarescas en el románico español," *El mensaje simbólico del imaginario románico*, ed. Fundación Santa María la Real and Centro de Estudios del Románico (Aguilar de Campoo, Palencia: Fundación Santa María la Real, C.E.R., 2007), 117–50 explored the interactions of different arts and of patrons, artists, and audiences along the pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela. Serafín Moralejo reviews the connections between visual and literary arts in Romanesque Spain in Serafín Moralejo Álvarez, "Artes figurativas y artes literarias en la España medieval: Románico, Romance y Roman," *Boletín de La Asociación Europea de Profesores de Español* 17 (1985): 61–70. He researched the connections between patrons, artists, and their audiences in Serafín Moralejo Álvarez, "Artistas, Patronos y Público en el arte del Camino de Santiago," *Compostel-*

This article examines one example of this intermingling in the sculpted musicians of the western portal of Santiago de Compostela Cathedral in Galicia, north-western Spain, and in a sculpted program in the adjacent Archbishop's Palace, created in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, respectively. These two sites epitomize the heyday of Santiago as the pilgrimage destination and the pursuant cultural and artistic blossoming along the routes leading to the remains of St. James stored in the cathedral.² In the monumental sculpted programs of both sites, musicians feature prominently, woven into the context of each, and closely attuned to the world of their respective viewers: the pilgrims visiting the cathedral and the dignified archbishop's guests at his palace.³ This article studies the figures of musicians as placed at the heart of an intersection between popular and sacred, visual and audible, religious and secular. I particularly highlight the design of these figures in relation to the musical reality of the period as a key to understanding their significance. I contend that rooting these programs in popular culture, especially the musicians, turned these figures into conduits for the message of the Church. By introducing familiar, popular characteristics into its programs, the

lanum: Revista de La Archidiócesis de Santiago de Compostela 30.3–4 (1985): 395–430. Barry Magrill studied the artistic, cultural, and social intersections in Romanesque England through representations in English Romanesque corbels: Barry Magrill, "Figurated Corbels on Romanesque Churches: The Interface of Diverse Social Patterns Represented on Marginal Spaces," *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 34.2 (2009): 43–54. For the influence of popular culture on sermons and language, see Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. Janos Bak and Paul Hollingsworth (1977; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For a more recent discussion on the sensual experiences of the sacred, see Robin Macdonald, *Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Robin Macdonald, Emilie Murphy, and Elizabeth L. Swann (New York: Routledge, 2018). Another discussion of the dichotomy of popular and elite in medieval Britain can be found in Carl Watkins, "'Folklore' and 'Popular Religion' in Britain During the Middle Ages," *Folklore* 115.2 (2004): 140–50.

2 In this article, for clarity, "Santiago" refers to the city of Santiago de Compostela, and "St. James" refers to the saint and namesake of the city – Santiago in Spanish.

3 The research of musicians in Romanesque sculpture is vast, and examples of musicians in marginal sculpture and manuscripts illuminations abound. This article will focus on the style and iconography of representations of musicians in sculpture and how their 'popular' roots were incorporated into the formal message. To read more about the representation of jongleurs in the Spanish Romanesque, see Huerta Huerta, "Entre el pecado y la diversion" (see note 1). The musicians of the Pórtico have fascinated art historians and musicologists alike for many decades, studying both musicians and instruments. See, for example, the edited volumes of both Carlos Villanueva and José López Calo: José López-Calo, *Los instrumentos del Pórtico de la Gloria: su reconstrucción y la música de su tiempo* (A Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 1994), and José López-Calo and Carlos Villanueva, *El Códice Calixtino y la música de su tiempo* (A Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2001), or Carlos Villanueva, *El Pórtico de la gloria: música, arte y pensamiento* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2011).

Church could communicate its sacred message directly with its audience.⁴ The sculpted musicians are of particular consequence because of their suggestive power, often harnessed to amplify the message. The resultant programs activated the viewers by recalling familiar sights and sounds. To demonstrate this interconnectedness of popular image, musical suggestion, and the message of the Church, I examine the sculpted programs of the palace and the cathedral in their context and against other portals produced along the pilgrimage routes.⁵

4 It should be noted that interpreting this complexity required some assistance, which was provided by creating visual parallels or expressions of familiar fables – the adulteress holding her lover's skull still visible in the Puerta de las Platerías of Santiago Cathedral, or elsewhere animals playing instruments, which echoed a lesson on the proper way to praise God. See for the latter Carlos Villanueva, "La voz de los instrumentos en manos de los juglares," *Medievalia* 15 (2012): 159–78; here 170–71. Additionally, guides for pilgrims included practical information as well as descriptions of the art along the way, most famously the *Codex Calixtinus*, with surviving samples of other, less renowned guides like the fourteenth century Add MS 12213 at the British Library. Furthermore, quite often, living guides operated in these sacred sites, interpreting the program and working on behalf of the site (as they do until today). This kind of work would require an in-depth knowledge and familiarity with both artistic program and its conceptual, theological framework. Conrad Rudolph discusses the role of these medieval guides at the Cluniac monastery of Sainte-Madeleine at Vézelay in Burgundy, France, with its highly intricate narthex tympanum. See Conrad Rudolph, "Macro/Microcosm at Vézelay: The Narthex Portal and Non-Elite Participation in Elite Spirituality," *Speculum* 96.3 (2021): 601–61.

5 While I focus in this article on the ways the awareness of the audience and their experiences influences and was then expressed in the iconography and style of the sculpted programs discussed here, I nevertheless draw from the vast research of the affective power of art on the senses in medieval visual arts. In the context of musical iconography in the Spanish context, Elizabeth Valdez del Álamo, for example, examined how elements of sight and sound were incorporated into the cloister of the monastery in Silos and its interaction with the faithful process. See Elizabeth Valdez del Álamo, "Hearing the Image at Santo Domingo de Silos," *Resounding Images, Medieval Intersections of Art, Music, and Sound*, ed. Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly. Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 71–90. Macdonald, Murphy, and Swann, *Sensing the Sacred* (see note 1), studied this theme in the realm between the sacred and the popular. Karen Rose Mathews examined the consideration of various types of audiences in the design of the south portal of Santiago Cathedral in Karen Rose Mathews, "Reading Romanesque Sculpture: The Iconography and Reception of the South Portal Sculpture at Santiago de Compostela," *Gesta*, 39.1 (2000): 3–12. She specifically noted the existence of local audiences alongside the more commonly acknowledged pilgrims to Santiago. Madeline Caviness offers a more methodological approach to the process of decoding the reception of a work of art by the first generation or two of original audiences. She also accounts for the notion that later audiences, art historians included, are influenced by their own reception of this same work in their research. She looks at additional documentation in search of the original reception. See Madeline Harrison Caviness, "Reception of Images by Medieval Viewers," *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 65–85.

The Power of Pilgrimage Art – Santiago de Compostela

The twelfth century saw a massive surge in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, drawing multitudes of pilgrims from Spain and beyond the Pyrenees. This period correlated with the final stages of the Reconquista in the Iberian Peninsula, effectively freeing northern Spain to reconnect with the rest of Christian Europe, a goal well served by the Santiago pilgrimage. A decisive force in promoting this pilgrimage was the Galician bishopric, which stood to gain both religious and financial capital from its success. Much of our knowledge today of this pilgrimage and its liturgy relies on the *Codex Calixtinus*, a twelfth-century compilation that included the history of St. James, his cult, and a Pilgrim's Guide.⁶

The increased movement along the routes created a need for new infrastructure – hostels, hospitals, walkways, bridges, and churches. The resultant creative bustle led to ideas and artistic styles travelling along the routes, artistic and architectural trends reappearing, intermingling with various regional idioms.⁷ The success of the pilgrimage was directly related to the promotion of the Compostelan see to an archbishopric in 1120, secured by then Compostelan bishop Diego Gelmírez (ca. 1069–ca. 1140) in a career long campaign with the Papacy. These international aspirations were present in everything promoted by Gelmírez and his successors

6 This manuscript is one of the most important surviving sources for the pilgrimage to Santiago, as it provides valuable liturgical and historical background. It also includes a detailed description of the sites along the pilgrimage routes. As with many contemporary sources, it is advisable to remember that this is not an objective historical account but one dedicated to promoting St. James, his cult, and his burial site as a pilgrimage destination. See, especially Juan J. Moralejo, María José García Blanco et al. *Liber Sancti Jacobi: "Codex Calixtinus,"* trans. A. Moralejo, C. Torres and J. Feo (Santiago de Compostela: Xerencia de Promoción do Camiño de Santiago, 2004). More detailed accounts of the history of the finding of the remains of St. James and the founding of his cult appear in Fernando López Alsina, "La posición de la Iglesia de Santiago en el siglo XII a través del Códice Calixtino," *El Códice Calixtino y la música de su tiempo: actas del simposio organizado por la Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza en A Coruña y Santiago de Compostela, 20–23 de septiembre de 1999*, ed. José López-Caló and Carlos Villanueva (A Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2001), 23–42; here 23. John W. Williams, "Orientations: Christian Spain and the Art of Its Neighbors," *The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500–1200*, by Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Abrams, 1993), 13–26; here 20, or Ramón Yzquierdo Perrín, "Os pazos arcebispaís de Santiago na historia e a arte," *Instrumentos de corda medievais: investigación, reconstrucción*, ed. Luciano Pérez Díaz (Lugo: Deputación Provincial de Lugo, 2000), 21–76; here 21.

7 See Moralejo Álvarez, "Artistas" (see note 1) for a detailed discussion of these artistic developments along the pilgrimage routes.

in what came to be regarded as the golden age of Santiago during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁸

The extraordinary upsurge in architectural and artistic output reached a climax in the extensive overhaul of Santiago Cathedral, spearheaded by Gelmírez, to accommodate the growing number of visitors and correspond with the culmination of the pilgrimage. Previous expansions began in the eleventh century when the numbers of visitors were starting to rise. Gelmírez was responsible, among other works, for the erection of an elaborately sculpted western façade, known as the *Pórtico de la Gloria*, or the Portal of Praise.⁹ This portal, today obscured by subsequent additions to the façade, boasts an elaborate sculpted facade executed in the height of Romanesque style, complete with an inscription that dates the completion of the works to April 1, 1188, and names Master Mateo as the artist and director of this project.¹⁰

Mateo's portal includes a triple doorway, decorated with a detailed portrayal of the Last Judgment spanning the entire façade. Prominently featured in the archivolt of the central tympanum above Christ in Glory are the Twenty-Four Elders

8 The emergence of Santiago during the twelfth century as a significant player in the Christian world has been researched extensively. For a thorough relay of events, refer to Richard A. Fletcher, *Saint James's Catapult: The Life and Times of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). For the role of the Santiago Church as appears in the *Codex*, see López Alsina, "La posición de la Iglesia" (see note 6); 23–42. For research of Christian Spain during this pivotal period, see Thomas Deswarte, *Une chrétienté romaine sans pape: l'Espagne et Rome (586–1085)* (Paris: Garnier, 2010), and Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000–1150)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). For the complex relationship of the Moorish and Christian communities, see Isidro Gonzalo Bango Torviso, "Arquitectura de La Décima Centuria: Repoblación o Mozárabe?" *Goya: Revista de Arte* 122 (1974): 68–75, or Richard Hitchcock, *Mozarabs in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Identities and Influences* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), or Williams, "Orientations" (see note 6).

9 Henceforth 'the Pórtico.'

10 The inscription is located on the lintel and reads: "ANNO AB INCARNATIONE DOMINI MCLXXXVIII ERA ICCXXVI DIE KALENDAS / APRILIS SUPER LIMINARIA PRINCIPALIU PORTALIUM / ECCLESIE BEATI JACOBI SUNT COLOCATA PER MAGISTRUM MATHEUM / QUI A FUNDAMENTIS IPSORUM PORTALIUM GESSIT MAGISTERIU" ('In the year of the incarnation of the Lord 1188, era 1226, on the first of April, the lintels of the main portal of the church of the blessed Santiago were set, by Master Mateo, who directed the works since the foundations of the same portals.'). For further discussion of the inscription, see Francisco Prado Vilar, "La culminación de la catedral románica: El Maestro Mateo y la escenografía de la Gloria y el Reino," *Enciclopedia del Románico, A Coruña*, vol. II, ed. José María Pérez González and José Carlos Valle Pérez (Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2013), 989–1018; here 993–94; and Serafín Moralejo, "El 1 de abril de 1188. Marco histórico y contexto litúrgico en la obra del Pórtico de la Gloria," *El Pórtico de la Gloria: Música, arte y pensamiento*, ed. Carlos Villanueva and Sverre Jensen (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2011), 19–38.



Fig. 1: Pórtico de la Gloria, detail, Santiago Cathedral, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1168–1188 (image source: Avia Shemesh)

of the Apocalypse of St. John's Revelation, chapter 5, holding and playing a variety of musical instruments (figs. 1–2).¹¹ The two lateral arches present Christ descending into Hell to the viewer's left and purgatory on the right. Christ in the central

¹¹ The Elders are mentioned on several occasions in the Book of Revelation, with a specific reference to their musical instruments in Rev. 5:8–9, where they are holding golden vials and harps while singing tier “New Song.” In Mateo’s portal, the Elders carry a variety of string instruments – vielle, harp, psaltery, and organistrum. It should be noted that, during this period, the organology, or study of instruments, can be challenging due to the paucity of surviving instruments and inconsistencies in both visual and textual references to instruments. For more detailed studies of medieval musical instruments, see Christian Rault and Yves d’Arcizay, *Instruments á cordes du Moyen Age: actes du colloque de Royaumont* (Grâne: Ed. Créaphis, 1999); Cristina Bordas Ibáñez, *Instrumentos musicales en colecciones españolas* (Madrid: Centro de documentación de Música y Danza, 1999); Sverre Jensen, “Reconstrucción de Los Instrumentos Sobre Un Estudio Comparado,” *El Pórtico de La Gloria: Música, Arte y Pensamiento*, ed. Carlos Villanueva (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2011), 119–72; Francisco Luengo, “Los instrumentos del Pórtico,” *El Pórtico de la Gloria: Música, arte y pensamiento: In Memoriam, Serafín Moralejo*, ed. Carlos Villanueva and Serafín Moralejo (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2011), 75–117; Jeremy Montagu, *Origins and Development of Musical Instruments* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2007); or Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London: Dent, 1987).

tympanum is showing his wounds, surrounded by the four Evangelists, angels holding the arma Christi, and the souls of the elect. Completing the program are column figures of the prophets on the left and disciples on the right. On the trumeau in the centre, St. James welcomes his believers into his chapel.



Fig. 2: Pórtico de la Gloria, detail, Santiago Cathedral, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1168–1188 (image source: Avia Shemesh)

The ‘Musicality’ of the Pórtico: A Tune Carried Along the Routes

The Elder-musicians of Mateo’s portal (figs. 1–2) play a pivotal role in the overall program, evident in their size and symbolical placement above Christ in Glory. Mateo highlighted their musicality as a staple of their identity in the design of their instruments and performance. This musical ensemble emphatically expands the interpretation of the textual “cithara” the Elders are holding in Revelations, including in the Pórtico multiple instrument families and types: vielles of different shape, harps, psalteries, and the two-player organistrum in the apex (fig. 1). The

musicality also comes through in the heightened naturalisms of the figures in body language, facial expressions, and decorative elements.

The combination of the three elements – the location of the Elders within the portal, the increasing flexibility in the instrumental representation of the textual “cithara,” and the naturalistic design – correlates with artistic developments in the other pilgrimage church portals of this period. Mateo executed his work between 1168 and 1188, as stated in the inscription on the lintel and corroborated in contemporary documents.¹² Mateo employed a familiar format in placing the Elders in the semicircular archivolt above the doorway, found in multiple church portals along the pilgrimage routes. Examples include Santo Domingo de Soria of the mid-twelfth century (fig. 3) or the late twelfth century San Esteban de Moradillo de Sedano (fig. 4). Both portals maintain the plurality of instruments and attentive portrayal of the musical performance typical of the Spanish sites.¹³ In Mateo’s skilled hands, these elements reached a climactic depiction of musical performance frozen in time, invoking the sounds of the New Song the Elders are playing.

The ‘musicality’ of the Spanish portals is thrown into high relief when compared with earlier French examples. The familiar semicircular format appears, but the diverse ensemble and musical naturalism are absent.¹⁴ These different interpretations of a similar iconography highlight a deliberate choice in the Spanish regions to harness the musicality imbued in this scene as an effective tool for communicating with audiences. The familiar iconography of the Elders along the routes, especially when infused with a powerful audible suggestion, created a spiritual and visual guide for the pilgrims on their journey. The Elders accompanying Christ in Glory exemplified an aspirational goal for the viewers who embarked on this pilgrimage hoping to occupy a similar place in the Final Judgment. Pilgrims reaching the Pórtico would have seen these portals of the Elders, leading them

12 Mateo’s name appears in a contract with King Ferdinand II from 1168, where he is referred to as *magister operis*. See, especially Prado Vilar, “La culminación” (see note 10), 993–94.

13 For research of Santo Domingo de Soria, see Esther Lozano López and Javier Martínez de Aguirre, *Un mundo en imágenes: la portada de Santo Domingo de Soria* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2006). For Moradillo, see Gerardo Boto Varela, “Victoria del Leon, humillacion del demonio. Una relectura de la fachada de Moradillo de Sedano (Burgos),” *Imágenes Y Promotores En El Arte Medieval Miscelanea En Homenaje a Joaquín Yarza Luaces*, ed. María Luisa Melero Moneo, Joaquín Yarza, Francesca Español Bertrán, Anna Orriols i Alsina, and Daniel Rico Camps (Bellaterra, Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Servei de Publicacions, 2001), 67–78.

14 Examples of the French portals can be found in Saint-Pierre, Aulnay de Saintonge, of 1140–1170, or Sainte-Marie d’Oloron, of the early twelfth century. See Peter Scott Brown, “Portal, Sculpture, and Audience of the Romanesque Cathedral Sainte-Marie d’Oloron,” Ph.D. diss., Yale University, New Haven, CT, 2004; and Catherine Dumas and Philippe Laugrand, *L’Église d’Aulnay-de-Saintonge* (La Crèche: Geste, 2017).



Fig. 3: Santo Domingo, Soria, detail (image source: Avia Shemesh)

gradually as a devotional ‘ladder’ which paralleled their physical progression, elevating their popular prayer into this praise of the risen Christ.

A Celestial Ensemble or Popular Performance – What are the Elders Playing?

The emphasis on musicality in the portals of the Elders invites the question: what music are the Elders meant to be playing? Sacred, to match the textual New Song, or a popular tune – to beguile their audience? While organological research of this period is challenging, extant visual and textual evidence suggests the instrumental ensemble of the Pórtico was most typical of popular, non-liturgical settings. Popu-



Fig. 4: San Esteban de Moradillo de Sedano, detail (image source: Avia Shemesh)

lar music during this time was not synonymous with secular and could include anything from love songs to devotional songs.¹⁵

¹⁵ The wealth of imagery contrasted with the paucity of documented information is a recurring challenge in the research of musical iconography of this period, heightening the significance of the visual representation as a source for the music of the period. Evidence includes documented street musicians and their music, polemics surrounding musical performance inside the church, performances of the liturgical drama, in addition to the visual resource of musical iconography. See Huerta Huerta, “Entre el pecado y la diversión” (see note 1), 119–49; or José López-Caló, *La música medieval en Galicia* (A Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrie de la Maza, Conde de Fenosa, 1982); or, for research outside Spain, see Margot Elsbeth Fassler, *Music in the Medieval West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2014).

We know that music played a central role in the artistic flourishing enveloping the pilgrimage routes. The frequent appearance of musicians in visual art,¹⁶ the inclusion of polyphony in the *Codex Calixtinus*,¹⁷ and textual accounts of musical performances during night vigils all point to a proliferation of musical performance. Two documented incidents are worth mentioning here. The first is an eleventh-century account from St. Foy in Conques, France in the writings of Bernard of Angers, who describes how pilgrims disturbed the local ceremony with their 'unruly singing'. He was dismayed but was informed by the local monks that the saint herself unbolted the doors for the pilgrims to keep their vigil and song. Another account appears in the *Codex* and describes a night vigil at the cathedral of Santiago, where pilgrims accompanied their song with a range of instruments listed in the text and calling to mind the diverse ensemble of the Elders in the portal of the ca-

16 Most significant to note in this context are the illuminated manuscripts of the *Beatus Commentaries of the Apocalypse*, attributed to monk Beatus of Liébana, written in the eighth century in Asturias, then copied and circulated in Spain until the thirteenth century. Surviving copies include many depictions of the musical Elders. See John W. Williams, "Purpose and Imagery in the Apocalypse Commentary of Beatus of Liébana," *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Emmerston and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 217–33. Another notable manuscript rich in musical iconography is the *Cantigas de Santa María* – a collection of poems with musical notation attributed to Alfonso X of Castile (1221–1284), of which many illuminated copies survived. See Paulino Capdepón, "La música en la época de Alfonso X el Sabio: las Cantigas de Santa María," *Alcanate: Revista de estudios Alfonsíes* 7 (2011): 181–214. In sculpture, musicians appear regularly in corbel tables and capitals of Romanesque churches in multiple contexts. For select samples of the expansive research on marginal imagery, see Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, "The Margins of Society in Marginal Romanesque Sculpture," *Gesta* 31.1 (1992): 15–24; or Lucy Freeman Sandler, "The Study of Marginal Imagery: Past, Present, and Future," *Studies in Iconography* 18 (1997): 1–49. A notable musician figure in sculpture during this period was David the musician, who was incorporated into sculpted programs, among which the southern portal of Santiago Cathedral – the Puerta de las Platerías. See, especially José López-Calo, "La música en la catedral de Santiago, A.D. 1188," *Pórtico de La Gloria: música, arte y pensamiento*, in *Memoriam Serafín Moralejo*, ed. Carlos Villanueva, Tino Martínez, Arturo Santos Zas, and Serafín Moralejo (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2011), 39–55.

17 There is no consensus among scholars whether the polyphonic sections in the *Codex* indicate a musical development originating in Santiago or imported there from the musical center in Paris. In this context, regardless of its origin, this musical advancement reflects both the interest and level of the musical school in Santiago. For further reading on the polyphony in the *Codex*, see Eva Esteve Roldán, "La Polifonía En El Códice Calixtino," *El Canto Gregoriano y Otras Monodias Medievales/ VI Jornadas de Canto Gregoriano*, ed. Pedro Calahorra Martínez and Luis Prensa Villegas (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2003), 82–120; or Edward H. Roesner, "The 'Codex Calixtinus' and the 'Magnus Liber Organi': Some Preliminary Observations," *El Códice Calixtino y La Música de Su Tiempo*, ed. José López Calo and Carlos Villanueva (A Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2001), 135–61.

thedral.¹⁸ Both incidents reflect a world in which music and song were a direct medium for pilgrims to express their faith and devotion. In a world where the liturgical ceremony was directed by the clergy and under strict rules of participation, these accounts of popular prayer, led by the believers and to channel their devotion, highlight the role music occupied within the public religious sphere. Their documentation further demonstrates their deviation from what was acceptable or within the norm of ecclesiastical practice.

It is, therefore, more than likely that the instruments of the Elders in the Pórtico represented a familiar sight and sound of the routes, laden with popular and religious value. This mixed association of the musical instruments between the sacred New Song of Revelations 5:8–9 and popular culture made them a perfect conduit for the faithful aspirations of the common viewer. This role was enhanced through the suggestive nature of this representation of musical performance, epitomized in Mateo's naturalistic style.¹⁹

The musical instruments of the Elders were not merely a reflection of everyday music but integral to the sacred message. Contemporary exegesis connected music and musical instruments to Christian spirituality. Thus, string instruments paralleled Christ's body stretched on the wood of the Cross, and three strings or triangular shapes denoted the Trinity, harmony, and divine order. This symbolism blended into the dominance of the Passion in these portals, often showing Christ presenting his wounds with angels carrying the arma Christi.²⁰

18 The first story appears in his account of St. Foy's miracles – Book 2, miracle 12 in Pamela Sheingorn, Robert L. A. Clark, and Bernardus, *The Book of Sainte Foy*, trans. Robert L.A. Clark (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 37. The second appears in the *Codex Calixtinus*, Book I, Chapter XVII. See also Fassler, *Music in the Medieval West* (see note 15), 117; and López-Calo, "La música en la cathedral" (see note 16), 41–42.

19 The Elders and their music have been interpreted as part of a metaphor of spiritual progression, with the pilgrimage was paralleled with the journey to the Heavenly Jerusalem, and musical scales denoting progress through the pilgrimage routes. See Carlos Villanueva, "La música en el Camino de Santiago," *Cuadernos de la Cátedra de Patrimonio y Arte Navarro*, No. 5: *El Camino de Santiago y las raíces de occidente*, ed. María Concepción García Gainza and Ricardo Fernández García (Pamplona: Cátedra de Patrimonio y Arte Navarro, 2011), 263–84; here 266; and Ángel Medina, "Notas sobre la simbólica música del Camino," *Cuadernos del CEYMYR* 6 (2008): 63–80; here 64–65.

20 The range of symbolical interpretations of musical instruments is richer than can be detailed in the scope of this article. For further discussion, see Manuel Castiñeiras, "El Concierto Del Apocalipsis En El Arte de Los Caminos de Peregrinación," *El Sonido de La Piedra: Actas Del Encuentro Sobre Instrumentos En El Camino de Santiago*, ed. Carlos Villanueva (Santiago de Compostela: Consellería de Cultura e Deporte, 2005), 119–64, where he discusses the association of harmony with morality in Romanesque iconography. These Passion themes were interwoven in the portals of the Elders – the portal of Sainte-Marie d'Oloron of the early twelfth century, for example, portrays

The coexistence of sacred exegesis and popular culture in the iconography of the Elders encapsulates the catering of these portals to different audiences; locals, clergy, and pilgrims, both erudite and lay.²¹ The blurring of the sacred with the secular was common and expected; it imbued the popular with its didactic meaning and justification while making the sacred more attainable.²² In the case of the Pórtico, this ‘mixing’ of influences was imperative to its affect. In this familiar scene, the viewers could imagine themselves as the Elders, accompanying Christ with their prayers and songs. The Elders of the routes thus straddle several blurred boundaries: the sacred and the popular, the visual and the audible, and the physical and the spiritual.

Same Performers, Different Tune: The Musicians of the Archbishop’s Palace

The Archbishop’s Palace, or Palacio Gelmírez, adjoins the cathedral to the north, facing the main square of Santiago de Compostela. Built and renovated over several centuries, it was during Gelmírez’s time when both cathedral and palace became symbols of power for this ambitious archbishopric. The palace was modeled

the Deposition from the Cross in the tympanum with the Elders in the archivolt. This association is derived from texts like those of Joachim of Fiore, who equated string instruments to Christ’s body on the Cross. Vicens Vidal analyses the connections of Passion themes to the portals depicting the Elders. See Francesc Vicens Vidal, *I cantaven un càntic nou ... (Ap. V, 9): els ancians músics de l’Apocalipsi a l’art romànic hispànic* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 2010), 100–01; and Francesc Vicens Vidal, “La idea del Passio Christi en la iconografia musical romànica: textos y contextos para una interpretación alegórica,” *Codex aquilarensis: Cuadernos de investigación del Monasterio de Santa María la Real* 21 (2005): 88–106; here 91–92. For Joachim’s work, see Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium Decem Chordarum* (Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva-Verlag, 1983) and Joachim of Fiore, *Liber Figurarum*, Bodleian Library, Corpus Christi College, MS 255 A. Further research of these texts in this context was published by Carlos Villanueva, “El Psalterium decem chordarum y otros dibujos musicales de Joaquín de Fiore,” *El sonido de la piedra: Actas del encuentro sobre instrumentos en el Camino de Santiago*, ed. Carlos Villanueva (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 2005), 197–222.

²¹ See note 5 for the discussion of the types of audiences interacting with these artworks and how this may have affected the reception of the sculpted portals and their subsequent research.

²² This method of making church messages more accessible instructed the representation of moral lessons in marginal art as well. In the church of San Martín de Fromista in Spain the original sin was echoed in the depiction of the fable of the fox and the crow, and at the Puerta de las Platerías in Santiago the punishment of an adulteress was included in the image of a woman holding her dead lover’s skull. See Moralejo Álvarez, “Artistas” (see note 1), 416–17, and Moralejo Álvarez, “Artes figurativas” (see note 1), 63–64.

after similar structures found outside Spain, primarily France, and intended to be fit to host the dignified guests of the archbishop.²³ This structure is also a rare example of a pre-fourteenth-century monumental civic structure in Spain.²⁴ The surviving building impressively boasts three stories, decorated halls, and fortified walls.²⁵

One of the most intriguing aspects of this structure is the spacious refectory on the second floor, dated to the renovations during Archbishop Juan Ariás's tenure (archbishop 1238–1266). This vast hall, of almost thirty-two meters in length, was richly decorated with a series of corbels spanning all four walls, as well as ribbed vaults (figs. 5–10). This space may have functioned as an episcopal refectory to host the banquet ritual, a reception space for important visitors, a meeting room for the archbishop's chapter, or a noble part of the palace for festivities or general meetings. Lampérez y Romea suggested it was likely used for all of the above, though any one of those would justify its dimensions and luxury.²⁶

The sculpted program of this room presents no known parallels, and the identity of the artists remains unknown, despite evident connections to sculpted portals of the period, Mateo's especially. As a rare example of a monumental-sculpted program designed for a civic setting and presented to a limited target audience, this space offers a glimpse of the direct communication of messages between Compostelan archbishopric and its distinguished guests – nobility and royalty. The viewing experience of this program widely differs from that of the Pórtico or other portals: the corbels are significantly smaller, placed much lower and closer

23 The palace was not researched nearly as much as the cathedral. An early research of the structure was published by Vicente Lampérez y Romea, *El antiguo Palacio Episcopal de Santiago de Compostela: papeleta para una "Historia de la arquitectura civil española"* (Madrid: Fototipia de Hauser y Menet, 1913). For an exhaustive review of the palace and its art, see Manuel Núñez Rodríguez, *El refectorio del Palacio de Gelmírez, El espejo moral de un espacio para yantar* (Santiago de Compostela: Consorcio de Santiago, 1996); or Perrín, "Os pazos" (see note 6), 21–76.

24 Civic here would mean non-liturgical, as this palace served the archbishopric and was very much part of the organized religious life in Santiago of this period.

25 The fortification testifies to the complex history of the city. Decades of political and financial strain led to civic unrest in Santiago, which exploded in several rebellions, most notably in 1117 and 1136. The uprisings shook the archbishop's status and safety, hampering his relationship with his local community and international aspirations. For more on the internal turmoil in Santiago, see Perrín, "Os pazos" (see note 6), 20–22, and Fernando Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago de Compostela en la alta edad media* (Santiago de Compostela: Ayuntamiento de Santiago de Compostela, 1988), 141–43; and for the account in the textual source, see Manuel Suarez, *Historia Compostelana; o, sea hechos de D. Diego Gelmírez* (Santiago de Compostela: Porto, 1950), 497–501.

26 Rodríguez, *El refectorio* (see note 23), 22; Romea, *El antiguo Palacio* (see note 23), 15. This reading is also supported by Perrín, "Os pazos" (see note 6), 48–50.



Fig. 5: Musicians Performing, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

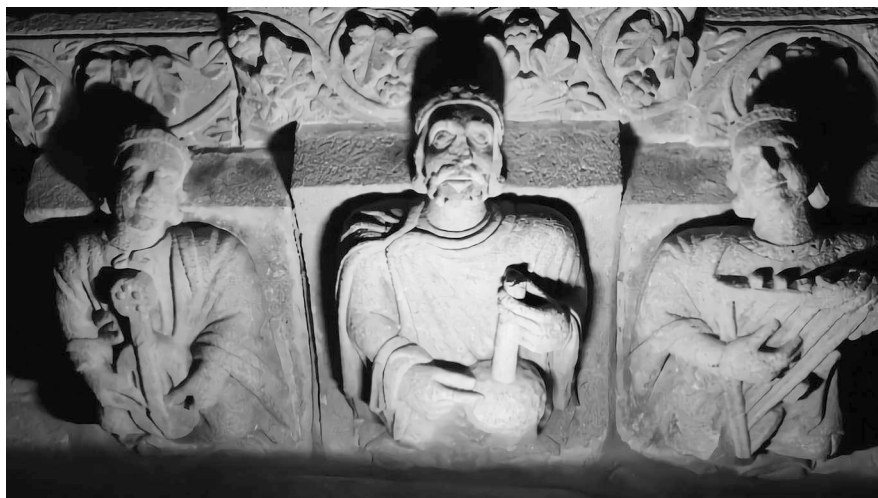


Fig. 6: Musicians Performing, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

to the viewer's eye line, and crafted as a series of scenes rather than incorporated into an emblematic portal above the threshold.



Fig. 7: Union Ceremony, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

The purpose of this space was reflected in the iconography. The corbel series presents a ceremonious banquet with many crowned figures and ritualistic scenes. Ten corbels – five on either of the long walls – portray banquet-related scenes: eating, serving food, and ceremony. In the eleventh corbel on the north, short wall, a priest is blessing the event (fig. 8). Five of the eleven corbels include musicians performing, sometimes separately, other times accompanying a central scene. These contents were presented to esteemed guests, likely better educated than the public for whom monumental art, like portals, was commonly created, to different ends. This was an opportunity for the archbishop to rally the support of his royal guests, as reflected in the choice of the royal banquet as a theme and relying on contemporary legal and moral code for monarchic rulers, as I will elaborate shortly. The heart of the program of the refectory is therefore based on representations of monarchy and church: crowned figures taking part in a banquet under the priest's blessing.

The musicians of the refectory are playing a variety of instruments. Some recall the musician entertainers customary at banquets, with typical characteristics such as the double flute and presented standing (fig. 9). Others appear crowned as part of the ceremonious scenes, accompanying the ritual or taking part in it (figs.

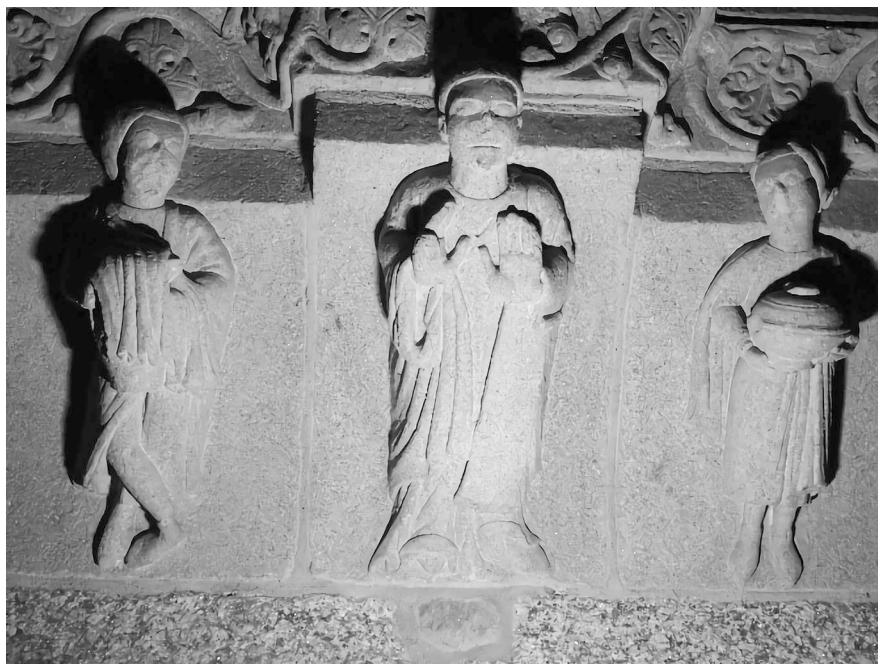


Fig. 8: Priest Blessing the Feast, Sculpted Corbel, refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

5–7).²⁷ The overall style of this program is highly detailed and naturalistic, including technical aspects such as tuning pegs and strings and details of food serving and tablecloths. The naturalistic figure style in body language, faces, and hands is decidedly reminiscent of Mateo's work in the Pórtico. Moreover, many of the musicians bear direct resemblance to their counterparts in the Pórtico. One highly recognizable example is the pair playing the organistrum included in both programs. Another is the figures tapping the gourds, included in the Spanish portals as the vials of the Elders, doubling as a percussion or pitch-giving instrument (fig. 2 on the left and fig. 6 in the middle). Its textual association was rendered irrelevant in the refectory, carrying over only Mateo's musical interpretation of this receptacle.²⁸ The artist of the refectory included additional sources in his work, ones that

²⁷ Villanueva, "La voz de los instrumentos" (see note 4), 167–68, discusses the different identifications of the musicians of the refectory – between the earthly jongleurs and the heavenly musicians.

²⁸ The transition of the gourds into the refectory is especially telling. In the Galician iconography, the textual vials took this form, likely due to the prevalence of the gourds in the region, taking on a musical role within the ensemble. The tapping in the Pórtico and other portals could be seen as

are foreign to the portals and the Elders, in his standing figures, for example. The many details of banquet serving and eating – plates of food, typical dishes, washing towels – introduce new iconography (fig. 10). The distinctly ‘Matean’ figures were thus incorporated into a new environment, melded into a new thematic context.



Fig. 9: Musicians Performing, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

The program of the refectory revolved around the idea of the king as the Vicar of Christ, placed on earth to protect God’s work – the Church. The juxtaposition of the spiritual and the temporal was rooted in legal and moral codes of the period and reimagined here in the symbolic heavenly banquet. These ideas regulated the monarchy-church relationship, ensuring the king upheld the moral code of the Church as the epitome of moral conduct. The edifying message subsumed therein was that

giving rhythm or pitch. Appearing again into the refectory, the gourds completely lose their original use as a receptacle and are included purely for their musical capacities. See more on this subject in López-Calo, *La música medieval en Galicia* (see note 15), 117–20.

the king's power and his successful rule were conditioned on his virtue in servicing faith. His ultimate reward was encapsulated in his participation in the heavenly banquet.²⁹ Every detail in this program supported this instructive message. The musicians carried special significance, reflected by their sheer numbers. They portray a dual role: the customary entertainment at royal banquets and the symbolical, heavenly associations introduced through their affinity with the Elders of the Pórtico. The performance of the royal banquet etiquette and the participation therein was placed in parallel to the heavenly banquet surrounding the guests in the sculpted corbels all around them. If music was performed at the same time, these sounds would be reverberated in the visual representation of the sculpted musicians performing in the heavenly banquet as symbolic crowned figures and as entertainer-musicians. This sculpted work, smaller in size and placed lower than the Pórtico, was designed for a much more intimate and prolonged viewing, which would allow this sculpted performance to accompany the actual ceremony taking place in this space.

The Pórtico and the Palace: Same Figures, Different Tune?

The refectory and the Pórtico juxtapose two monumental-sculpted programs presented in the same urban space and political climate but to different audiences and created almost a century apart. In both programs, the musicians feature prominently, highlighting the different approaches to communicating a message to an audience using stylistic and thematic choices. The inclusion of the musicians of the Pórtico in the refectory demonstrates the malleability of musical iconography to suit contextual needs. It is evident the artist of the refectory was highly inspired by Mateo's work, and it is likely the privileged audience of the refectory would have seen the Pórtico.³⁰ Crucially, the musicians did not lose their symbolical value in their new context but incorporated them into the celestial banquet.³¹

²⁹ The scholastic framework for these concepts was found in thirteenth century compositions such as the Castigos of Sancho IV – part of the genre of the *specula principis*, or moral guides for the ideal ruler, based in the Christian state. See Rodríguez, *El refectorio* (see note 23), 27–28, 66–69, 117–23 for the perception of the harmonious union between Church and monarchy during this period. For the source, see Ana María Marín Sánchez, “*Castigos de Sancho IV*”: *versión extensa* (Ms. BNE 6559) (San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja): Cilengua, Instituto Historia de la Lengua, 2017).

³⁰ At the time, the Pórtico would have been easily visible from the Obradoiro square and later blocked from view by additions to the façade. There is textual evidence of ceremonies and processions that took place in the city, with some held at the Pórtico or passing through it. One source for



Fig. 10: Food Serving, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

these ceremonies is the *Book of the Coronation of the Kings of Castile*, today at the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, MS & III.3, possibly composed by Alfonso IX. See *El Libro de la Coronación de los Reyes de Castilla*, Patrimonio Nacional. Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial (Madrid), Manuscrito & III.3. For the analysis of this ceremony and its association with the sculpted program of the cathedral, see Francisco Prado Vilar, “Cuando Brilla la Luz del Quinto Día: el Pórtico de la Gloria y la Visión de Mateo en el Espejo de la Historia,” *Románico: Revista de Arte de Amigos Del Románico (AdR)* 15 (2012): 8–19; here 17–19.

31 Some of the symbolism, such as the Passion associations and the notion of harmony, was adapted with ease, especially the latter in relating to the harmonious rule of monarchy and Church. In addition, the banquet introduced new symbolical themes. One is the corporeality, or the tension between sinful lust and carnal appetite, and the moral strength required to restrain them. The musicians and their gestures became part of this view of the body as a vehicle of morality, expressed also in the hierarchies of musicians between sacred and earthly. See Villanueva, “La voz de los instrumentos” (see note 4), 167–68 for his discussion of the different types of musicians, and Núñez Rodríguez, *El refectorio* (see note 23), 66–69 for the interpretations of the corporeality in the program.

Focusing on the musical figures allows us to explore the adaptation of an iconographic theme to the desired message and target audience. Along the pilgrimage routes, musical iconography provides a wealth of samples to trace consistencies and divergences, such as the transformation of the Elders from the relatively homogeneous and static groups of the French portals to the impassioned orchestra of the Pórtico. The interpretation of these figures was rooted in the world of popular pilgrims' music and the rich symbolism of the redemptive theme intrinsic to the pilgrimage. At the Archbishop's Palace, the musicians incorporate new associations of the harmonious rule of Church and monarchy at the celestial banquet. While reusing iconographic details and existing models was a common practice of this period, it is in the adaptation of the figures that the intention of the patrons can be gleaned. The musicians became inherent to these programs, dominant visually and thematically – in service of the message.

The musicality of these sculpted programs acted as a prime factor in the recurrence and effect of these monumental artworks. The naturalistic 'turn' in the Spanish portals isolated the role of the sculpted musicians by instilling a powerful, multi-sensory suggestion, modulated to the mixed audiences who frequented these sites. The musical effect was emphasized further by focusing on the instruments and the act of playing. Both elements reached a climax in Mateo's heavenly orchestra. In the refectory, the artist maintained this instrumental versatility as part of the framework of the celestial and earthly banquets. As musical performances regularly took place in public spaces and probably in the refectory, these figures would have induced a living, sounding resonance. Through these versatile figures, the artists and patrons of these programs could shorten the distance between artwork and audience, activating the viewer's imagination with an image rooted in both the sights and sounds of their world. The blurred boundaries were not so much encroachment of the popular into the sacred as a direct path to the viewer's mind and soul.

Sharon Khalifa-Gueta

Image and Legend of Saint Margaret as an Aid in Childbirth Rituals

Abstract: Focusing on objects of medieval rituals, this article discusses the iconography of St. Margaret and the Dragon, emphasizing the gap between the saint's legend and her visualization in medieval art. I refer to the pagan sources of the image and to its secular and folkloristic perspectives, suggesting that the figure of St. Margaret is a mirror image of demons that prevent fertility, such as Lilith, and was conceived as part of the historic development of the motif of "the woman and the dragon" and an anguiped (half-woman and half-dragon) image, intending to chase away her mirror rivals. Thus, it is clear that the portrayal sprang from the secular folk sphere and was adopted and clothed in Christianized sacred schemes.

Keywords: amulets; childbirth; dragons; Jacobus de Voragine; *Hystera*; Olibrius; pain; pearls

Saint Margaret was one of the most popular saints during the medieval period and early modernity in Western Europe.¹ Although her hagiography, her cult and her role are highly researched and written about, her image is less so.² In my analysis

1 For only a handful of general studies of Saint Margaret, see Frederic Spencer, "The Legend of Saint Margaret," *Modern Language Notes* 4.7 (1889): 197–201; Frances M. Mack, *Seinte Marherete: De meiden ant martyr* (London and Oxford: H. Milford and Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1933); Joseph-Marie Sauget, "Marina (Margherita)," *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, 13 vols. (Rome: Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1961–1970), 8: 1150–60; Juliana Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon: The Cult of Saint Margaret of Antioch in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). I have investigated the present topic also in a similar paper with a different emphasis, "The Image of Saint Margaret and the Motif of the Woman and the Dragon," *Mediaevistik* 35 (2023): 213–247.

2 For general investigations of Margaret's iconography, see George Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence: Sansoni, 1952), 649–58; Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955–1959), 3: pt. 2, 877–82; *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, Günter Bandmann, and Wolfgang Braunfels (Rome: Herder, 1968–1976), 494–500; Federico Zeri, *Italian Paintings: A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Florentine School* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1971), 48–49; Peter Murray and Linda Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 304–05. For investigations of Saint Margaret iconography that focuses on particular images, see William M. Milliken, "'Saint Margaret' by Antonello

of her iconography with the dragon I stress the gap between texts that describe her legend and her visualization as linked to the visual tradition from which her image sprang. Moreover, I suggest that the miniature amuletic objects on which Saint Margaret's image appeared had a psychomedical function to increase the sense of control and security of women in labor. I connect this to modern studies on the experience of childbirth and coping with pain, to further stress the crucial function of the artifact and the para-ritual of childbirth.³ I will discuss the inconsistency between the text and the image of Saint Margaret alongside their fluidity as they ease, comfort, and empower women during the highly stressful event of childbirth, suggesting how both text and images of Saint Margaret were intended to help a woman in the throes of childbirth and repeated infant mortality, during and immediately after childbirth.

Jacqueline Marie Musacchio and Don C. Skemer relate several occasions on which Saint Margaret's artifacts have been connected to childbirth, such as on the cover of a *capsa* – a small box with a tiny amulet of text – that exhibits both Saint Margaret's *Life* and image on its cover (fig. 1), and in the statue of Saint Margaret on the bed from Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini's Wedding*, signifying a blessing for the couple's fertility (fig. 2).⁴ These examples and many others em-

Gagini," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 30.1 (1943): 3–5; Josepha Weitzmann-Fiedler, "Zur Illustration der Margaretenlegende," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst, dritte Folge* 17 (1966): 17–48; Lois Drewer, "Margaret of Antioch the Demon-Slayer, East and West: The Iconography of the Predella of the Boston Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine," *Gesta* 32.1 (1993): 11–20; Julia I. Miller, "Miraculous Childbirth and the Portinari Altarpiece," *Art Bulletin* 77.2 (June 1995): 249–61; Leanne Gilbertson, "The Vanni Altarpiece and the Relic Cult of Saint Margaret: Considering a Female Audience," *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishment on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, ed. Stephen Lamia and Elizabeth Valdes del Alamo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 179–90, pl. 8; Leanne Gilbertson, "Imaging Saint Margaret: *Imitatio Christi* and *Imitatio Mariae* in the Vanni Altarpiece," *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sally J. Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 296 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 115–38; Wendy R. Larson, "The Role of Patronage and Audience in the Cults of Sts. Margaret and Marina of Antioch," *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge, 2005), 23–35; Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 173–81, which although focuses on England, the text also offers examples from different parts of Europe in her investigation of the dragon encounter of Saint Margaret.

³ Karen P. Smith, "Transforming Virgins: Margaret of Antioch, Snake Maidens and Medieval Mentalities," Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, 2000.

⁴ Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 158–59, 186–87; Larson, "The Role of Patronage" (see note 2), 30.

phasize Saint Margaret's importance in childbirth and infant protection.⁵ The small scale of these objects suggests they were meant to be placed on the body, probably on or around the belly of a woman, such as a birth girdle scroll, MS M.779 fol. 1r, dated to ca. 1450, from Belgium, in Morgan Library and Museum at New York. The wearing out of these items suggests that the image faced inward, toward a woman's abdomen.⁶

I suggest that the image of Saint Margaret was created to bridge Christian officiants' desire to eliminate pagan manifestations and people's tendency to turn to old traditions to help with fears regarding childbirth. I also argue that having an amuletic image of a saint that also encapsulates great ancient feminine powers, such as in the case of Saint Margaret, must have had a beneficial emotional effect on women in labor.

5 Marvin C. Ross and Glanville Downey, "A Reliquary of St. Marina," *Byzantinoslavica* 23 (1962): 41–44; Cynthia Hahn, "The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries," *Gesta* 36.1 (1997): 20–31; Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 141–44; Ásdís Egilsdóttir, "St. Margaret, Patroness of Childbirth," *Mythological Women: Studies in Memory of Lotte Motz, 1922–1997*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Wilhelm Heizmann (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2002), 319–30; Skemer, *Binding Words* (see note 4), 239–50; Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 309–10, 508, 512–13; Mary Morse, "Alongside St. Margaret: The Childbirth Cult of Saints Quiricus and Julitta in Late Medieval English Manuscripts," *Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, 1350–1550: Packaging, Presentation and Consumption*, ed. Emma Cayley and Susan Powell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 187–88, 193–94, 201–03, nn. 38–40; Jenny C. Bledsoe, "Practical Hagiography: James of Voragine's Sermones and Vita on St. Margaret of Antioch," *Medieval Sermon Studies* 57.1 (2013): 29–48; Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 14.

6 Walter J. Dilling, "Girdles: Their Origin and Development Particularly with Regard to Their Use as Charms in Medicine, Marriage and Midwifery," *Caledonian Medical Journal* 9 (1912–1914): 337–57, 403–23; Ginevra Niccolini di Camugliano, *The Chronicles of a Florentine Family, 1200–1470* (London: Cape, 1933), 112; Jacqueline Herald, *Renaissance Dress in Italy, 1400–1500* (London: Bell and Hyman, 1981), 28; Jean-Pierre Albert, "La légende de Sainte Marguerite: Un mythe maïeutique?," *Razo* 8 (1988): 19–31; here 24, n. 14; Gilbertson, "The Vanni Altarpiece" (see note 2), 180–81, 185; Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, and Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 168–74; Skemer, *Binding Words* (see note 4), 239–50; Bledsoe, "Practical Hagiography" (see note 5), 29–48. This ritual was probably related to the older ritual of placing a snake's skin on the belly of a woman in labor; see *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Comen's Medicine*, trans. and ed. M. H. Green, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 2: 102–03; Peter M. Jones and Lea T. Olsan, "Performative Rituals for Conception and Childbirth in England, 900–1500," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89.3 (2015): 406–33; here 409.



Fig. 1: French, Cuir ciselé case, 1491, Morgan Library and Museum, New York (M1092) (© Morgan Library and Museum)

Text and Story

Although Saint Margaret's martyrdom is thought to have transpired at the end of the third century (289–290 C.E.) or the beginning of the fourth century (309 C.E.), the first evidence of her story – or actually that of her Eastern identical twin, Saint Marina – is documented by Radulph of Rivo. He wrote in Rome in 1403 the *Libre de Canonum Observantia*, which mentions that Saint Marina was included in the apocryphal canon literature of the fifth-century Pope Gelasius.⁷ The first extant hagiographies are from the eighth and ninth centuries: for example, the Greek *Us-ener* variation, which was said to have been copied by Saint Methodius from an

⁷ *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*, ed. Johannes Bolland, 69 vols. (Antwerp, 1643), 5: 31. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 98; Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 13.



Fig. 2: Jan van Eyck, Arnolfini Portrait, 1434, Oil on panel, 82.2 cm × 60 cm, National Gallery, London (public domain)

earlier variation during his stay in Rome between 815 and 820;⁸ or the *Mombritius* popular Latin variation, named after its editor, from the ninth to tenth centuries.⁹ All early versions are well-formed, evincing the existence of earlier variations upon which they were based. Juliana Dresvina remarks that the storyline remains surprisingly stable for centuries.¹⁰

The most popular version of Saint Margaret's *Life* was part of the *Golden Legend*, which was written around 1260 by the Dominican friar Jacobus de Voragine and is thus the most suitable for discussion. Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* is considered a Western Europe "bestseller." A very popular book in medieval and early modern Western Europe typically has a dozen extant copies, but the *Legenda Aurea* has more than a known thousand copies, making it one of the best-known books of the time (albeit not as popular as the Bible and New Testament). Numerous copies of the French variation, *Légende dorée*, have been retrieved from

⁸ Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 15.

⁹ Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 16.

¹⁰ Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 7.

books of the courts of France, such as manuscript MBW 237–45, which is specifically associated with Anne of Brittany.¹¹ For this reason, following Voragine's account is relevant for a general understanding of the plot of the Saint Margaret story, known all over Europe.

Voragine begins Margaret's *legenda*, or *Life*, with the etymology of the name Margaret, which means "pearl." In the time of the Roman emperor Diocletian, Margaret was a noble girl from a pagan family in Antioch who was sent to be raised by a Christian wet nurse. This carer had Margaret baptized, and she was consequently banished by her father. As she tends her nurse's flock of sheep, Margaret's beauty attracts Olibrius, a pagan prefect, who desires her as his wife or concubine. As a Christian, Margaret intends to preserve her virginity, so she refuses Olibrius, and as a result, is condemned to be tortured. In an attempt to force Margaret to renounce her faith, her torture is escalated from words to the use of rods and iron hooks. She becomes so disfigured from this torture that the hideous sight is too much for Olibrius, and he sends her away. While in her prison cell, she prays to God to show her her enemy, and a huge dragon appears. She makes the sign of the cross, and the dragon vanishes.

At this point, Voragine is uneasy; he feels compelled to inform the readers of a different story in which Margaret is devoured by the dragon. He critiques this variation, writing: "What is said here, however, about the beast swallowing the maiden and bursting asunder, is considered apocryphal and not to be taken seriously."¹² This scholarly man's problem is not with a dragon miraculously arriving after being summoned by a woman, but with the saint's trip inside the creature's innards. Why then is he bound to tell the tale anyway? Margaret's artistic manifestation is the likely reason, for this was the most popular of her iconography. Al-

11 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, intro. Eamon Duffy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pt. 93, 368–70. Hilary Madocks, "Pictures for Aristocrats: The Manuscripts of the Légende dorée," *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard James Muir (Philadelphia, PA, and Sydney: Harwood Academic Publishers and Craftsman House, 1991), 1–24. For the *Légende dorée*, MBW 237–245, see Cynthia J. Brown, *The Queen's Library: Image-Making at the Court of Anne of Brittany, 1477–1514* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 310. For more information about the *Legenda aurea*, see Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: Harper, 1958); Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Barbara Fleith, "Le classement des quelque 1000 manuscrits de la *Legenda aurea* latine en vue de l'établissement d'une histoire de la tradition," *Legenda aurea: sept siècles de diffusion*, ed. Brenda Dunn-Lardeau (Montreal and Paris: Bellarmin and J. Vrin, 1986), 19–24.

12 Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (see note 11), 368.

though this element of the plot contradicts erudite theologies, it was, nonetheless, acceptable to and in high demand by artists and their audiences.

Now, the dragon vanishes from her side and a black demon appears. Margaret overpowers him, and while she crushes his neck under her foot, he tells her the demonology of the world, beginning with Solomon.¹³ In other variations, she smashes him with a hammer;¹⁴ in Voragine's she exorcises him with words. The next day her torture continues with torches and boiling water. This aqueous torture which precipitates the conversion to Christianity of the five thousand people in the watching crowd,¹⁵ after which Margaret is sentenced to death by beheading. In her prayer, she calls for women in labor to pray to her to ensure healthy children, and "that any woman who invoked her aid when faced with a difficult labor would give birth to a healthy child. A voice from heaven announced that her petitions had been heard."¹⁶ She is beheaded, and her head is taken to Heaven by angels.

Other textual variations demonstrate similar unease to that of Voragine toward the idea of the maiden being swallowed by the dragon. Several of the earlier Greek variations question if this event in fact took place. The *Metaphrastes* variation eliminates the dragon and the demon altogether, the author clearly stating his wish to correct a narrative full of fables.¹⁷ Several early Latin sources followed the Greek *Metaphrastes* tradition in rejecting the saint's encounter with the dragon and the demon; the *Rebdorf Passion*, for instance, reduces the experience to a mere vision (*phantasma*).¹⁸ Taken together, these variations reveal Christian writers' early attempts to challenge the truthfulness and validity of her most popular image. In this article I explore possible reasons as to why this version particularly troubled male Christian theologians.

Although hagiographic writers of the life of Saint Margaret were not enthusiastic about the detail of the saint traveling within and bursting out of the dragon, this was a well-known Christian formula, which alluded to the journey of Christ in

13 Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 158–72.

14 Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 206–07; Drewer, "Margaret of Antioch the Demon-Slayer, East and West" (see note 2), 11–12; Juliana Dresvina, "The Significance of the Demonic Episode in the Legend of St. Margaret of Antioch," *Medium Aevum* 81.2 (2012): 189–209; here 194.

15 Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 98–101.

16 Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (see note 11), 370.

17 Laurentius, *Bewerte Historien der lieben heiligen Gottes*, IV, fols. 182v–183r; Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 14–15.

18 Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 17–19.



Fig. 3: Jean Bourdichon, Saint Margaret and the Dragon, *Les Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne*, 1500–1508, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms latin 9474, fol. 205v (source: gallica.bnf.fr/BnF)

the underworld, alongside prefigurations and metaphorical allusions.¹⁹ The variation from the *Marciana* codex indicates that, while in the belly of the dragon, Marina prayed to the prophet Jonah. This anecdote, conceptually as well as visually, creates a connection between the image of Marina/Margaret and that of Jonah being swallowed by the big fish. Early Christian images depict Jonah being swallowed by and bursting out of a Ketos dragon.²⁰ In this assimilation between Margaret and Jonah, both function as *imitatio Christi* (imitating Christ). Being swallowed by the dragon or big fish is equivalent to descending into hell; the coming out of the dragon equates to being resurrected. A visual example of the *imitatio Christi* concept can be seen in Jean Bourdichon's illustration of Saint Margaret from *Les grandeshHeures d'Anne de Bretagne* (fig. 3), in which the saint is posed with one leg inside the dragon's body while the other steps out of it, duplicating the gesture of Christ's resurrection from his tomb, as can be seen, for example, in Piero della Francesca's 1463 fresco of *The Resurrection* from the Museo Civico at Sansepolcro (fig. 4).

Jean-Pierre Albert's "La légende de Sainte Marguerite: Un mythe maïeutique," uses the structural method to connect the story of Saint Margaret bursting out of the dragon and the pearl as her symbolic emblem to Margaret's role as the protector of childbirth. Albert rightly demonstrates that there is a structural connection between a pearl within a shell and Margaret coming forth out of the dragon: both are symbolically connected to childbirth, imitating the moment of the child coming out of the body of its mother.²¹ However, Albert does not address the fact that the visual image of Saint Margaret does not follow the narrative in her legend. In fact, her visualization tells a completely different story, widening the gap between it and her literary description. I contend that her iconography is related to the millennia-old motif of "the woman and the dragon," stressing that her image encapsulates ancient concepts of apotropaic protection. "The woman and the dragon" motif is fundamentally connected to childbirth and fertility rituals that lingered from pagan times.

19 Peter 4:6. This was elaborated by apocryphal stories: Ephesians 4:9. Kate Mary Warren, "Harrowing of Hell," *New Advent*, ed. Kevin Knight, 2013: <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07143d.htm> (last accessed on May 13, 2023).

20 Bezalel Narkiss, "The Sign of Jonah," *Gesta* 18.1 (1978): 63–76; John Boardman, "Very Like a Whale': Classical Sea Monsters," *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval World*, ed. Edith Porada, Ann E. Farkas, Prudence O. Harper, and Evelyn B. Harrison (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, check 1987), 73–84.

21 Albert, "La légende de Sainte Marguerite" (see note 6), 19–31.

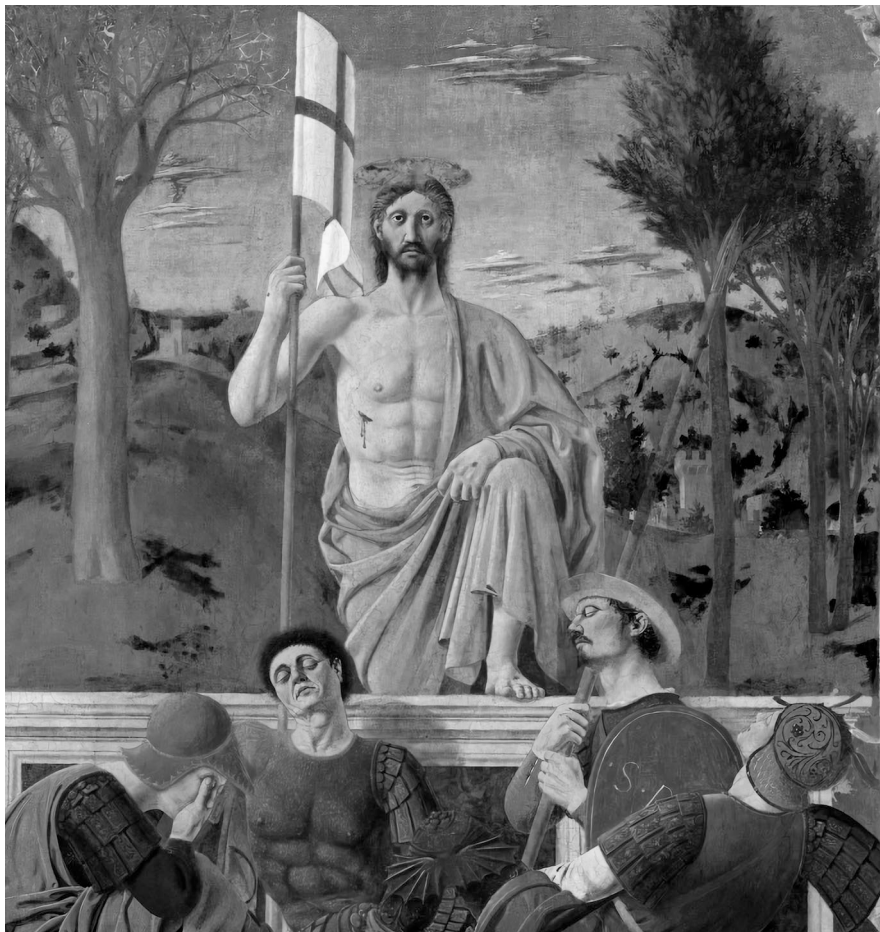


Fig. 4: Piero della Francesca, *The Resurrection*, Fresco, 1463, 225 cm × 200 cm, Museo Civico, Sansepolcro (public domain), detail

The Image of St. Margaret

Several types of depictions of Saint Margaret exist in her *Life* cycle illustrations, but the most popular and typical one by far is the iconography of the saint emerging from within the dragon. Scholars usually describe the most popular depiction of Saint Margaret as bursting out of the dragon's belly or as defeating the dragon. These scholarly descriptions are a result of predetermined literary influences that have little to do with the actual image. Although defeating gestures, such as the *cal-*

catio colli type or a spear sunken in the dragon's body are present,²² they represent a minority of her images. In about a hundred images I examined for the purpose of this investigation, made in various media – from monumental paintings and sculptures to miniature illustrations and artifacts such as pilgrimage coins and jewelry – and from all over Western Europe, the vast majority depict the iconography of the saint emerging from the dragon. Her gloomy prison cell usually appears more like a luxurious lounge, most of the time even open to the outdoors, such as in the miniature illustration from the 1415 *Book of Hours* made for Jean, the Duke of Berry, Ms. 650, 146r, from the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal at Paris (fig. 5). In most images the saint is seated on the back of a dragon, or to be more precise, depicted as riding or uniting with the dragon in an anguipedic manner – half woman and half dragon. She looks like a plant sprouting from the back of the dragon as from the earth.

The dragon, in this iconography, is portrayed not dead as in the text but very much alive, and in most of the images, part of Margaret's dress protrudes from its jaws to indicate her previous presence inside its body. The saint is usually praying; the calm and cooperating dragon sometimes joins in the meditative mood. She occasionally looks at the dragon without animosity, sometimes even expressing care and sorrow. In the illustration by Jean Bourdichon (fig. 3), the dragon's tongue, instead of the saint's dress, protrudes from its mouth. Its head is placed at an angle that echoes the location of the saint's hands holding the cross, and its gaze is fixed on the same location at which the saint looks.

In comparison with the narrative, the visual iconography of the saint does not present her as if she has just endured brutal torture, which, according to written descriptions, tore her clothes and flesh. On the contrary, she looks like a lovely maiden of high rank, matching the intended high-class female readers of the time and location of the books of hours. The objective in this mimetic parity was to create empathy between an aristocratic female worshipper and the saint. The saint's appearance represented the ideal vision of an aristocratic maiden, with lustrous porcelain skin and lush hair. She was intended as a visual and behavioral role model.

The powerful image of the female saint collaborating with the dragon rather than slaying it was also highly problematic for church authorities, as Jocelyn G. Price notes, since it presented a female saint with the prized and extremely powerful ability to perform a summoning and an exorcism, an ability reserved almost

²² For the *calcatio colli* (crushing your enemy) gesture, see Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 173. For the speared dragon, see Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Margaret*, in the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam.



Fig. 5: Saint Margaret and the Dragon, miniature illustration from the Book of Hours of Jean, Duke of Berry, 1415, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, Ms. 650, fol. 146r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

exclusively for holy male protagonists. Price notes that, according to Church clerics' writings, such a power should not have been within the capability of any female, even a saint. Yet the image of the female saint performing what was considered impossible for a woman – summoning, taming, and exorcising a dragon – continued to appear in visual representations. The collision of pagan folk beliefs and Christian theology explains the disturbing and enigmatic aspects of this saint, as well as the dissonance between her written hagiography and visual images. As this analysis reveals, Saint Margaret poses a syncretic consolidation of two opposing belief systems, born of the connection between the saint and the motif of “the

woman and the dragon.” Such a bridge was particularly important because of the motif’s close relation to childbirth rituals.²³

The gap between the narrative and the visual iconography and the masculine clergy’s clear discomfort with this image suggest that the image in fact follows a tradition different than a mere saintly religious one. Indeed, Margaret’s story adheres to a tradition of female virgin saints who suffered tremendously in order to preserve their virginity, but Margaret’s summoning of the dragon and the black demon is significantly abnormal in that tradition.²⁴

Saint Margaret and the Ancient Motif of “the Woman and the Dragon”

The depiction of Saint Margaret with the dragon, I contend, fits within the larger structure of the imagery of the motif of “the woman and the dragon.”²⁵ This motif harkens back to the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Minoan, and Greco-Roman concept of a woman with a dragon as an emblem of a great fertility goddesses, such as Wadjet, who was imaged as an anguipedian; Hygieia, who feeds the serpent;²⁶ Ceres, who travels in a dragons-driven chariot; Vesta, who also feeds the serpent; and the Vestal virgins, who are associated with the cult of Juno Sospita and the dragon.²⁷ This image is such a fundamental structure in Mediterranean cultures that its manifestations go back even to prehistoric times.²⁸

23 On the problem of syncretism, see Anita M. Leopold and Jeppe S. Jensen, *Syncretism in Religion: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2014).

24 For discussion of the formula of female virgin saints, see Petroff, *Body and Soul* (see note 7); Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints’ Lives and Women’s Literary Culture, c. 1150–1300: Virginity and Its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Virginity Revisited: Configurations of the Unpossessed Body*, ed. Judith Fletcher and Bonnie MacLachlan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 5, 66–99.

25 Sharon Khalifa-Gueta, *The Woman and the Dragon in Premodern Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023).

26 Serpents and dragons are the same in ancient art, see Sharon Khalifa-Gueta, “The Evolution of the Western Dragon,” *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 4.4 (October 2018): 265–90.

27 For further discussion of Wadjet, see Alison Roberts, *Hathor Rising: The Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt* (Devon: Northgate, 1995), 34; Sally B. Johnson, *The Cobra Goddess of Ancient Egypt: Predynastic, Early Dynastic, and Old Kingdom Periods* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1990); Barbara S. Lesko, *The Great Goddesses of Egypt* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 23–24, 81–82. For further discussion of Hygieia, see “Draco,” *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, ed. Charles Daremberg and Edmond Saglio (Paris: Hachette, 1877–1904), 408–09; Gina Salapata, “The Tippling Serpent in the Art of Lakonia and Beyond,” *Hesperia: Journal of the*

During the medieval period, magical amulets identified as Υστέρα (*hystera*, or womb) and intended for protection of childbirth rituals were imaged as serpents emerging from a head like a radiant sun – the head of Medusa – in direct continuation of Medusa amulets dating back to the second century B.C.E. Hellenistic period. An example of these talismans is the lead *Medusa Hystera* and “the Holy Rider” *Vanquishing a She-Demon* amulet, dated to the tenth to eleventh centuries, from the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford (fig. 6).²⁹ Several objects of this *hystera* group have a common formula written on them: “Υστέρα μελάνη μελανομένη ως ὄφις εἰλύσαι καὶ ἰς δράκον συρίζησε καὶ λέων βρυχᾷσι καὶ ως ἄρνιον κοιμοῦ” (Womb, black, blackening, as a snake you coil and as a serpent you hiss and as a lion you roar, and as a lamb, lie down!).³⁰

American School of Classical Studies at Athens 75.4 (2006): 541–60; Daniel Ogden, *Drakōn: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 251, 318. For Ceres’s image, see the Pantelic marble sarcophagus relief of *Persephone’s Rape*, from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, dated to 160–180 C.E. For further discussion of Ceres, see Arthur B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914–1940), 1: 211–31. For Minoan images, see the neopalatial Minoan *Snake Goddess* statue from the Palace of Knossos, now in the Heraklion Archaeological Museum, dated to 1700–1450 B.C.E. For further discussion of the Minoan goddess, see Kenneth Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess: Art, Desire, and the Forging of History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 60–90; A. Trčová-Flamee, “The Motif of the Snake and Its Meaning in Minoan Iconography: The Relation between Crete, Egypt and Near East,” *Eirene* 39 (2003): 119–49; Geraldine C. Gesell, “The Snake Goddesses of the LM IIIB and LM IIIC Periods,” *British School at Athens Studies* 18 (2010): 131–39. For Vesta’s image, see C. Firminus Pupius’s sculpture *Vesta as Feeding the Serpent* from the Antikensammlung in Berlin, dated to 140–150 C.E. For further discussion of Vesta and the Vestal Virgins, see Jean-Marie Pailleur, “La vierge et le serpent de la trivalence à l’ambiguïté,” *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome antiquité* 109 (1997): 513–75.

28 For prehistoric anguipedic figurines, see the terracotta statue from Ur of the *Anguipedian Breastfeeding*, dated to the Early Warka period (4000–3500 B.C.E.), in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. For further discussion of the anguipedian, see Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, 6500–3500 B.C.E.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 112; Adele Getty, *Goddess: Mother of Living Nature* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 12–13; Ariel Golan, *Myth and Symbol: Symbolism in Prehistoric Religions*, trans. Rita Schneider-Teteruk (Jerusalem: Golan, 1991), 101–14 [Hebrew].

29 Moses Gaster, “Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing Witch,” *Folklore* 11.2 (1900): 129–62; Jeffrey Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993): 25–62; Dorit Rosenzweig, *Lilith, a Demon with a Borderline Personality Disorder: The First 1000 Years of Jewish Lilith* (Tel Aviv: DoLa Publishing, 2010), 183 [Hebrew]; Naama Vilozny, *Lilith’s Hair and Ashmodai’s Horns: Figure and Shape in Magic and Folk Art: Between Babylon to the Land of Israel in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2017), 149 [Hebrew].

30 Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets” (see note 29), 25–31; Vilozny, *Lilith’s Hair and Ashmodai’s Horns* (see note 29), 149.



Fig. 6: Medusa Hystera and “the Holy Rider” Vanquishing a She-Demon amulet, lead, ca. eleventh to twelfth century, D. 4.35 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (© Jeffrey Spier)

The obverse of a *hystera* amulet sometimes shows “the holy rider,” as seen on the *hystera* amulet from the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 6). “The holy rider” is usually identified as King Solomon or one of various saints who vanquish a she-demon.³¹ The image originates in iconography that emerged in late Antiquity, in which a good ruler vanquished a dragon, such as on the mid-fourth-century B.C.E. medal of Constantius II. The dragon, however, is replaced by a female figure in these amulets, usually depicted with her breasts exposed to stress her femininity. In time, the image became anguipedic, as on a bronze Byzantine *Holy Rider* amulet from the sixth to seventh centuries in the Dumbarton Oaks Museum (fig. 7) in which the lower body of the female is fully transformed into that of a dragon.

On the majority of “holy rider” amulets, several of which are on the back of *hystera* amulets, the rider is explicitly identified as Solomon, as inscribed on a medallion pendant amulet from the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. This iconography is associated with a third-to-fourth-century A.D. apocryphal story, the *Testament of Solomon*, in which the eponymous hero is presented as an archetypal exorcist and catches the demon Obyzouth, who, like Lilith, menaces childbirth and infants. The female figure becomes Lilith when, in later Jewish traditions,

31 Gary Vikan, “Two Byzantine Amuletic Armbands and the Group to which They Belong,” *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 49.50 (1991–1992): 33–51; here 33, 39, fig. 15.



Fig. 7: Holy Rider amulet, Byzantine, bronze, ca. 6th–7th century, 5.4 cm x 5.1 cm x 0.08 cm, Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Washington, DC (BZ. 1950.15) (© Dumbarton Oaks Museum)

the male figure changes from Solomon to Elijah, in whose story Lilith's name appears. In this case, it is appropriate to follow the methods of Siegmund Hurwitz that view these different female demons as one and the same. The different names of the demons have etymological meanings such as “the strangler” or “the night owl” that are similar to Lilith, but they stand for the same thing, dangerous beings of the night.³² Lilith is depicted as an anguipedian or *dracontopede*,

³² *Testament of Solomon*, 13.973; Gaster, “Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing Witch” (see note 29), 129–62; Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 208–21; Armand Delatte and Philippe Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1964), 261, nn. 369–77; Suzanne Lewis, “The Iconography of the Coptic Horseman in Byzantine Egypt,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 10 (1973): 27–63; here 50–51; Siegmund Hurwitz, *Lilith, the First Eve: Historical and Psychological Aspects of the Dark Feminine*, foreword Marie-Louise von Franz, trans. Gela Jacobson (1980; Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon, 1992), 115–39; Rosenzweig, *Lilith* (see note 29), 180–84, with specific reference to incantation bowl no. 42 of Montgomery, 188, n. 25; Vicky A. Foskolou, “The Magic of the Written Word: The Evidence of Inscriptions on Byzantine Magical Amulets,” *Delton of the Christian Archaeological Society* 35 (2014): 329–48; here 338, with the in-

particularly in images of the original sin in Eden, as can be seen in the illustration of *Eve and Lilith* by Berthold Furtmeyr, in the Furtmeyr Bible, BSB, Cgm 8010a, fol. 10r, in the Bavarian State Library at Munich, dated after 1465 (fig. 8).³³

I contend the image of Saint Margaret not only Christianizes the pagan or folk traditional concept of anguipedian images as a threat to childbirth but is also apotropaic protection of childbirth by banishing like demons. In this sense, the image of Saint Margaret was intended to bridge ancient folk beliefs concerned with the protection of fertility, childbirth, and infants, and the Christian belief in saints. This might also explain the reason why a virgin saint is used as the protector of childbirth.

Apotropaic protection is a well-known concept, aimed at banishing demons that are akin to the depicted image – as seen in Medusa's images portrayed on temples, magical amulets, and houses, among other media.³⁴ Later examples are gargoyles on the outside of churches, meant to ward off demons.³⁵ The same concept is present in the figure of the dead Christ on the cross, who chases away death.³⁶ In this case, I claim that the image of Saint Margaret is a mirror image of fertility demons, such as Lilith, constructed as an anguipedian, intended to banish similar ri-

scription on a glass medallion as follows: “Σφραγὶς Σολομόνου ἔχει τὴν βασκανία” (the seal of Solomon restrains the evil eye).

33 Alice Kemp-Welch, “The Woman-Headed Serpent in Art,” *Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review* 52.310 (1902): 983–91; Fernand de Mély, “Nos premiers parents dans l’art: Adam, Eve, Lilith,” *Mélanges Hulin de Loo* (1931): 116–22; Jeffrey M. Hoffeld, “Adam’s Two Wives,” *Metro-politan Museum of Art Bulletin* 26.10 (1968): 436, although these investigations are not without fault. For more debate on the *dracontopede* figure in visual representations of original sin, see John K. Bonnell, “The Serpent with a Human Head in Art and in Mystery Play,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 21.3 (1917): 255–91; Henry A. Kelly, “The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent during the Middle Ages and Renaissance,” *Viator* 2 (1972): 301–28; Nona C. Flores, “‘Effigies Amicitiae’ . . . Veritas Inimicitiae’: Antifeminism in the Iconography of the Woman-Headed Serpent in Medieval and Renaissance Art and Literature,” *Animals in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. Nona C. Flores (New York: Garland, 1996), 167–95; Frances Gussenhoven, “The Serpent with a Matron’s Face: Medieval Iconography of Satan in the Garden of Eden,” *European Medieval Drama* 4 (2001): 207–30; Anne Dunlop, “Flesh and the Feminine: Early-Renaissance Images of the Madonna with Eve at Her Feet,” *Oxford Art Journal* 25.2 (2002): 127–48; Shlomit Lederman, “The Face of the Serpent as the Face of Eve,” *Image and Sound: Art, Music, History*, ed. Yerachmiel Cohen (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for the History of Israel, 2007), 87–105 [Hebrew].

34 Stephen R. Wilk, *Medusa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 42; David Leeming, *Medusa: In the Mirror of Time* (London: Reaktion, 2013), 45.

35 Janetta R. Benton, “Gargoyles: Animal Imagery and Artistic Individuality in Medieval Art,” *Animals in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. Nona C. Flores (New York: Garland, 1996), 147–65.

36 Herbert L. Kessler, “Christ the Magic Dragon,” *Making Thoughts, Making Pictures, Making Memories: A Special Issue in Honor of Mary J. Carruthers, Gesta* 48.2 (2009): 119–134.

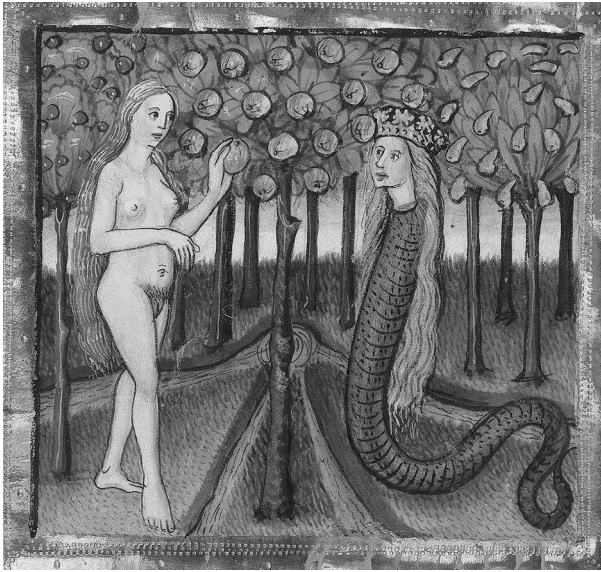


Fig. 8: Berthold Furtmeyer, Eve and Lilith, Furtmeyer Bible, after 1465, Munich, Bavarian State Library, BSB, Cgm 8010a, fol. 10r (© Bavarian State Library)

vals. Thus, the image sprang from a secular, folk sphere and was adopted and embodied in Christianized frameworks.

This and other evidence suggest that wombs are an allegory of serpents, and the burning pain of the contractions of childbirth was related to the birthing fire of dragons. Therefore, images of Saint Margaret embody a motif that has lingered for millennia and connotes agriculture, fertility, and the great feminine power of creation, which were deeply rooted in Mediterranean cultures. The story of the motif of “the woman and the dragon” is one of communication, collaboration, union, and assimilation, but never conflict between women and dragons.

Saint Margaret’s Function in Childbirth Rituals

The *capsa* (fig. 1), the birth girdle scroll from the Morgan library, and the statue of Saint Margaret on the bed from Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini’s Wedding* (fig. 2),³⁷ are

³⁷ Skemer, *Binding Words* (see note 4), 158–59, 186–87; Larson, “The Role of Patronage” (see note 2), 30.

only a few examples of the large number of tiny amuletic objects that portray Saint Margaret, and are testified to have been used in childbirth para-rituals.³⁸ These examples and many others show the importance of Saint Margaret's image and text to childbirth and infant protection and their complementary role in this ritual.³⁹ The miniature objects were probably meant to touch the laboring women's body, and be placed on or around their belly. The wear-out condition of these artworks indicates that the image was meant to touch the woman's skin.⁴⁰

These images were meant to provide apotropaic protection against demons in the houses where childbirth took place. Such beliefs included the cosmological idea that the women's vaginas and bellies were liminal locations where a struggle with demons took place and where demons could emanate. The woman's stomach had to be wrapped up and contained so that the demons – which were inside her yet were from a different dimension – would be prevented from exiting the womb. Thus, the wrap around the belly restricted passage through the opening gate (the vagina), much as gargoyles do for a church, so that the baby can pass through but the demons cannot.⁴¹ This demonology aspect makes the woman in labor feel as if she is taking part in a cosmological battle between good and evil, harnessing her will in the service of this combat so that she can prevail.

At this stage, I suggest that miniaturization theory, as conceived by scholars of antiquity such as Susan Stewart, Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, and S. Rebecca Martin, is valuable for an understanding of the fundamental function of the tiny amuletic objects in childbirth para-rituals. Miniaturization theories claim that minia-

38 On the para-ritual of childbirth, see Katherine L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 50–54.

39 Ross and Downey, "A Reliquary of St. Marina" (see note 5); Hahn, "The Voices of the Saints" (see note 5); Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (see note 5), 141–44; Egilsdóttir, "St. Margaret, Patroness of Childbirth" (see note 5); Skemer, *Binding Words* (see note 4), 239–250; Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* (see note 5), 309–10, 508, 512–13; Morse, "Alongside St. Margaret" (see note 5), 187–88, 193–94, 201–03, nn. 38–40; Bledsoe, "Practical Hagiography" (see note 5); Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (see note 1), 14.

40 Dilling, "Girdles" (see note 6); Di Camugliano, *The Chronicles of a Florentine Family* (see note 6), 112; Herald, *Renaissance Dress in Italy, 1400–1500* (see note 6), 28; Albert, "La légende de Sainte Marguerite" (see note 6), 24, n. 14; Gilbertson, "The Vanni Altarpiece" (see note 2), 180–81, 185; Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, and Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (see note 6), 168–74; Skemer, *Binding Words* (see note 4), 239–50; Bledsoe, "Practical Hagiography" (see note 5), 29–48. For an elaboration on theological debates on women's skin, see Dunlop, "Flesh and the Feminine" (see note 33).

41 For an elaboration of the cosmological methods described here, see *Framing Cosmologies: The Anthropology of Worlds*, ed. Allen Abramson and Martin Holbraad (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

turizing has didactic, play, and psychological value by creating a “sensual engagement” between object and beholder (and physical holder), stimulating the imagination by creating an “abstraction of space and time,” and offering a metaphor for the interiority of its possessor.

In that sense, the tiny amuletic image is an instrument for breaching time and space in the para-ritual, enhancing the cosmological aspects of the event. The psychological engagement between the image of Saint Margaret and women in labor is one of assimilation, role model, supreme protector, and guide. The fact that it is a tiny object with enormous magical powers,⁴² that also touches the body,⁴³ intensifies these feelings, forming a psychological time and space that provides a sense of concentration in the here and now, and of security – by creating an ‘out of this world’ experience. This ability of the miniature amulet to form a liminal time and space is also extremely important in the Medieval female context, because chastity and self-awareness of the body was a central issue for a woman.⁴⁴ But the childbirth experience requires acts to be performed that are contrary to these norms: the exposure of the body, the loosening of the organs,⁴⁵ the trust in strangers – sometimes from a different class, and heroism. Thus, the miniature amulet that represents the conceptual saint creates a safe place and guides her in this liminal space and time.

Langin-Hooper asserts that the entanglement between object and holder creates intimacy wherein each “exercises power over the other.” In other words, holding a god in your hand creates “a life within a life.”⁴⁶ The fact that the amuletic miniature is so tiny and the object is in the woman’s control yet is an emblem of a powerful saint with its own great power over the woman, and not only her but the entire room or even house. This intimate power interaction was intended to constantly reassure the woman of her powers and abilities. The intimate relation formed between the saint and the woman in labor gives the woman spiritual

42 On the power of magical amulets, see Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (see note 32).

43 On touch in medieval culture, see Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

44 Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Consolation of the Blessed: Women Saints in Medieval Tuscany* (New York: Alta Gaia Society, 1979), 31–62; Petroff, *Body and Soul* (see note 7), 97–109.

45 German Torres, Mervat Mourad, and Joerg R. Leheste, “Perspectives of Pitocin Administration on Behavioral Outcomes in the Pediatric Population: Recent Insights and Future Implications,” *Heliyon* 6.5 (2020) e04047: 1–7.

46 Elizabeth Bartman, *Ancient Sculptural Copies in Miniature* (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1992); *The Tiny and the Fragmented: Miniature, Broken, or Otherwise Incomplete Objects in the Ancient World*, ed. Rebecca S. Martin, and Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, *Figurines in Hellenistic Babylonia: Miniaturization and Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

guidance that increases her sense of control combined with looseness, which is optimal for the childbirth experience.

Modern research on the pain of childbirth suggests that if the woman feels in control, the experience is less painful. Moreover, coping strategies during labor were crucial factors for the memory of a less painful and positive childbirth experience.⁴⁷ I suggest here that the combination of a Saint Margaret image on a miniature amulet, her text, and their function within the larger setting of the childbirth para-ritual of childbirth, were meant to provide a coping strategy and to increase the sense of control of the women in labor.

The devotional image of Saint Margaret and her *legenda* were probably intended to guide the progression of childbirth, during which she had a therapeutic function. Her image allowed the laboring woman to focus, providing her with a heroine role model and emotional guidance. Musacchio's discussion of the mental image as a meditative-magical means for reassuring and comforting women in labor emphasizes the importance of this tool in enhancing a sense of control.⁴⁸ The torments of labor are analogous to those of the saint's torture; the tearing of Margaret's clothes and flesh and her ripping through the dragon's belly is associated with moving through and overcoming pain. The dragon is analogized to childbirth pain, but unlike male heroes that defeat the dragon, Saint Margaret is depicted as sitting calmly and cooperatively within the living dragon, symbolically mirroring the process of childbirth. Her image instructs laboring women not to fight against, but to collaborate with and harness their pain (the dragon), so that they may feel a greater sense of control.

Musacchio discusses another key issue concerning the power and magical effect of images on the imagination, believed to affect reality.⁴⁹ As previously mentioned, Price stresses the importance of the power of imagination in Saint Margaret's story, in her ability to generate the dragon in her cell. A protective saint is presented with ancient fertility symbols and reception aspects of ancient Great Mother Goddesses yet does not forget her powers of imagination and visualization in creating realities and destroying the powers of evil, making her the perfect role model and guide for women in their journey through childbirth. Providing a mental image of a saint who comes forth from, unites, and collaborates with a dragon,

47 For modern investigations that suggest how pain is reduced in childbirth experience when the sense of control is enhanced, see Cheri Van Hoover, "Pain and Suffering in Childbirth: A Look at Attitudes, Research, and History," *Midwifery Today with International Midwife* 55 (2000): 39–42; Susan Ayers, "Thoughts and Emotions during Traumatic Birth: A Qualitative Study," *Birth* 34.3 (2007): 253–63.

48 Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* (see note 5), 125–48.

49 Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* (see note 5), 128–30.

together with the story of a female dragon exorcist, intensifies the feminine power of the woman in labor and strengthens her belief in her ability to imagine realities. Margaret's artifact reassures, comforts, and empowers women during the most hazardous experience of their lives.

Just as Margaret overpowered with her mind (without a weapon), contained, and made the dragon collaborate with her, the laboring woman is instructed to imagine herself containing her pain with the power of her thoughts, forcing her womb to cooperate with her, and using the pangs of childbirth to her benefit. She should strive for a more effective progression of childbirth by enhancing her feeling of control and empowerment. The woman in labor becomes part of the cosmological battle between good and evil and is transformed to feel as if she is part of something great and important outside of her own existence.

It is claimed here that amulets and rituals function as time capsules and manifest much older traditions and that artifacts have the capacity to negotiate between past rituals and current belief systems, which is particularly true for liminal events such as childbirth that revolve around great distress.

Jean Bourdichon's illustration of *Saint Margaret* further depicts the saint inside a coiled dragon (fig. 3), which echoes the Ouroboros dragon. This creature assumes a circular shape, usually holding its tail in its mouth, but in this case the tail is delicately hung around its neck.⁵⁰ All dragons symbolize the circulation of time and the cycle of the feminine fertility,⁵¹ Medusa, in this context symbolizes the female vulva.⁵² The most interesting aspect of this image is the way in which the dragon encircles the saint, like a constricting snake, symbolizing the pain of birth, which contracts the body. The saint's leg relates to her breaking the cycle of time – through her martyrdom she gained salvation – and also breaking the cycle of pain. The coiled dragon is symbolic of the pain that encircles the woman.

To conclude I suggested here that the image of Saint Margaret was created to bridge Christian officials' desire to eliminate pagan manifestations and people's tendency to turn to old traditions to help with fears regarding childbirth. Her

50 An example can be seen in Albrecht Dürer's illustration of *The Genius of Time* dated to 1495, from the British Museum, in London, which depicts a man presenting an Ouroboros dragon in his hand. Walter L. Strauss, *The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer* (New York: Abaris, 1974), 378–79, fig. 1495.59.

51 Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon, 1955), 211–39; Chris Knight, "Lévi-Strauss and the Dragon: Mythologiques Reconsidered in the Light of an Australian Aboriginal Myth," *Man: Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18.1 (March 1983): 21–50; Sharon Khalifa-Gueta, "The Leontocephaline from the Villa Albani: Material Documentation for Religious Entanglement," *Humans* 2.2 (2022): 31–49; here 36–40.

52 Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head: Capital Visions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 28–36.

image is an adjustment of a millennia-old mental image of “the woman and a dragon” motif. The anguipedian depiction, as it relates to childbirth and infant protection endured from pagan times and survived in secular folk traditions. The image of Saint Margaret was meant as a bridge between this visual symbol and was adapted into a Christianized female saint formula of medieval and early modern western Europe. It is no wonder that the churchmen who wrote her story pointed out its apocryphal and pagan aspects, which they felt they must delineate for readers, but at the same time warned against it. Both the image and the text of Saint Margaret were meant to work together and separately during childbirth, to assist women in labor; her image on miniature amulets, which used the effect of its miniature size, coupled with the tremendous symbolic power of this specific saint is intended to have an emotional effect on women aimed at easing the childbirth experience. By combining both secular and sacred beliefs, her images and texts worked together fluidly to improve the safety and success of the delivery in the premodern context.

Tovi Bibring

Violent Women and the Blurring of Gender in some Medieval Narratives

Abstract: This chapter focuses on literary depictions of women's attempts to challenge the phallocentric patriarchal society and resist the masculine established order by displaying violent or even murderous behavior toward men in French medieval literature. I contend that such brutal scenes were often cloaked as comic narratives and were perceived by the readers as nothing more than fiction – literary events that would never be seen in reality. I discuss the blurred boundaries between masculine and feminine behavior as they are dealt with in the twelfth-century romance *Cligès* by Chrétien de Troyes, Fénice's *fausse mort*, *Lai d'I-guanré*, by Renaut, and the Hebrew *Tale of Old Bearded Achbor* by Yaakov Ben Elazar.

Keywords: *Cligès*; adultery; courtly love literature; *fausse mort*; *fin'amor*; Herodotus; *Lysistrata*; sex strike; gender

In his *Histories*, written in 430 B.C.E., Herodotus tells the story of Lycides, an Athenian councilor who was stoned to death by his fellow countrymen in Salamis, where they held their counsel, for having expressed an unpopular opinion. Either after being bribed or genuinely believing it to be a good idea, Lycides claimed that the decision to accept a peace offering from the Macedonians should be brought before the people. The Athenians were outraged by such a pacifistic suggestion and stoned Lycides for considering ending the war with no formal victory. When the news arrived in Athens, the Athenian women reacted similarly, going to Lycides's house and stoning his wife and children to death.¹ This "climatic point with which the story ends"² shows how women imitate, on a smaller and more private scale, the behavior displayed by men publicly. As stated by Sara Forsdyke, the women's "behavior replicated, in the manner of ritual, the actions of the men."³ Far from the male public place, where the men killed a fellow man who articulated words perceived as expressing cowardice, the women penetrated the

1 *Histories*, Book 9, ch. 4–5.

2 Ove Strid, "Voiceless Victims, Memorable Deaths in Herodotus," *The Classical Quarterly* 56.2 (2006): 393–403; here 398.

3 Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales: And Other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 156–57.

private sphere associated with females, where they killed what was considered to be the inferior part of his family, Lycides's innocent wife and children.

Forsdyke studied the notion of "popular justice" in ancient Greece, and while addressing the issue of women's participation in such rituals, she gave the example of the stoning of Lycides and linked this episode to another of Herodotus's writings. In his fifth *History*, Herodotus recounts that though his fellow warriors all slaughtered one another in an attack of madness, the sole Athenian survivor who returned to Athens from Argive did not live much longer:

For when he returned to Athens, bringing word of the calamity, the wives of the men who had been sent with him to Aegina thought it a terrible thing that he alone should be saved; they therefore crowded around him and struck him with the brooches by which their gowns were fastened – each woman, as she struck, asking him where her husband was.⁴

Forsdyke uses these two episodes to show that regardless of the amalgamation between fiction and reality, "we are still left with the presumably historically valid belief that women might spontaneously engage in collective punishment of a social offender."⁵ Thus, the Athenian survivor was probably considered a coward who had run from the battlefield rather than die heroically like his fellow soldiers. This would have questioned his manhood and labeled him effeminate, deserving to die a non-heroic death at the hands of women, rather than brave soldiers, and by repetitive stings of a piece of jewelry rather than one stroke of a weapon.

As in Lycides's account, there is a clear gendered distinction between male and female execution. Whether the Athenian women killed the sole survivor to avenge their widowhood or the man's cowardice, this action was alarming for the patriarchal society, as it rocked the accepted social order. According to the *Histories*, this resulted in the women being punished and prohibited from wearing dresses with brooches.⁶

The fifth *History* presents the episode primarily as a matrimonial matter, and the fantastical brooches anecdote, if not comical, will at least produce a smile. Thus, the story shares common ground with Aristophanes's comedy *Lysistrata*, in which the initial conflict stems from the women's threat to remain without hus-

⁴ Translation quoted from Herodotus, *Histories*, trans. Pamela Mensch, ed. with introduction and notes James Romm (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), book V, ch. 87, 296.

⁵ Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales* (see note 3), 228–29.

⁶ This is an etiological punishment, similar to the one we see in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligès* which will be studied below. According to this medieval romance, as a result of Fénice's ruse, which ended with the annulment of her marriage to the emperor, the women of Constantinople were punished and forced to cover their heads with veils.

bands, simultaneously connecting them, much more implicitly in Herodotus's writings, to their sexual nature. In *Lysistrata*, except for a short incident recounted by the chorus, according to which the old women beat the men, women do not conduct acts of physical violence against men *per se*. Led by Lysistrata, all Greek wives go on a "sex strike," attempting to restore peace and prevent war, an achievement they deem beyond the scope of the men's abilities. While this seems like a ludicrous situation, it also makes an important statement, as in this manner the wives in *Lysistrata* shake many pillars of male authority. For example, they reverse the prevalent stereotype that women are sexually insatiable and prove that it is the opposite: it is men who cannot survive without sex.⁷ Another stereotype that is invalidated is that women are fatal, as in *Lysistrata* men are those responsible for obliterating humanity with the wars they initiate and allow to persist. The fact that the comedy is about wives specifically is significant. The essence of the story is not about preventing sensual pleasures, although, for the sake of comedy, this is what is presented initially. Rather, fundamentally, it is about life and death. This is the message the women are attempting to convey by avoiding sex, i.e., by stopping legitimate procreation. They refuse to become mothers to sons who will be killed by other men. In addition, they imply that the world would have been

7 It should be noted that such prejudices do exist in the text: Lysistrata struggles at first against them, when her fellow women seem to prefer having sex with their husbands before they are persuaded to collaborate and implement her suggestion. In a thirteenth-century mordant satirical anonymous Latin text, *Salomonis et Marcolfi*, a mob of women breaks into King Solomon's palace and attacks him and his counselors, causing them a great deal of damage, because of the rumor that the king is about to establish a law that will allow each man to marry up to seven women. Jan M. Ziolkowski noted that the proposed polygamy is associated with biblical standards extant during King Solomon's time. It could then be argued that the women's fury upon hearing of the decree is anachronistic. The Oriental ancient atmosphere was merely a dissimulation of the western medieval European society into which it was transposed, where polygamy (or, by abstraction, what we could call today polyamory) was already a deep-rooted religious taboo, abhorred both in courtly and popular genres. However, with distinct burlesque and misogynistic tones, the women in this tale do not rebel for any of the conventional reasons (immorality, infidelity, or economy, see below). Their arguments return to the stereotype of feminine unsatiated greed and sexuality. They fear to remain sexually unsatisfied and suggest turning the decree upside down: "Non est dux neque comes neque princeps qui sit tantarum diviciarum ut uni vires hominis est istud face. Melius est enim ut unaqueque mulier septem habeat maritos est istud facere. Melius est enim ut unaqueque mulier septem habeat maritos, ut mones laborent unde una uxor procuretur." [There is no duke, count, or prince who has so much wealth that he may fulfill the wishes of even one wife. What will he do if he has seven? To do this is beyond the capacities of a man. In fact, it is better that every single woman should have seven husbands, that they should all toil for what one wife would obtain.] Ziolkowski's edition and translation quoted from *Solomon and Marcolf*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 94, 95.

much better ruled by women.⁸ While women do not commit physical violence in *Lysistrata*, they prove that, hypothetically, when women organize together for a significant cause, they can bring to their destruction. However, this is only hypothetical, as “In the end, the dangerous situation returns to normality, which implies a submission of the women to men.”⁹

The examples above show that for the Greeks, the theme of the women man-slayers always seems to be conveying a message about gender hierarchization from a patriarchal perspective. It perpetuates the gendered construal of activeness (positivized, male) and passiveness (negativized, female) either by blurring the gender expectations (masculinized women imitating a manly activity, feminized men undergoing a womanly humiliation) or by reinforcing them through belittling the female pattern (women cannot accomplish the heroic male deed, merely imitate it on an inferior scale). Such representations fortify male attitudes regarding the patronization of women. Women do participate in social life and concerns, but they are limited and controlled. They are not conceived of posing a “real” risk to “real” men. They are either perilous to what patriarchal standards would claim as inferior human beings (cowards, women, and children), or the threat they pose is extinguished within the borders of parody and comedy. At their times, Herodotus’s and Aristophanes’s texts were probably addressed more toward men than women, yet both women and men would have been familiar with the ideas they convey, and thus such phallogocentric messages played a role in anchoring gendered prejudiced perceptions.

The topos of women grouping together and attacking transgressing men was received and adapted into medieval literature.¹⁰ The medieval belletrist world remained chiefly masculine.¹¹ Misogynistic and derogative views of women were still

8 Anton Bierl notes that *Lysistrata* “wants to stop the terrible effects of the devastating Peloponnesian war, which is a threat to marriage, reproduction and fertility” (263). However, Bierl considers that to be part of the stereotyped representation of women as “body-driven beings” (263). Anton Bierl, “Women on the Acropolis and Mental Mapping: Comic Body-Politics in a City in Crisis, or Ritual and Metaphor in Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata*,” *Crisis on Stage: Tragedy and Comedy in Late Fifth-Century Athens*, ed. Andreas Markantonatos and Bernhard Zimmermann (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 255–90; here 263.

9 Bierl, “Women on the Acropolis and Mental Mapping” (see note 8), 287.

10 While it is worthwhile to delve further into the existence of the topos historically, here I performed a conscious jumping about 1800 years, from Herodotus’s and Aristophanes’s Greece to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the European literary apogee, which is the core of my examination.

11 Women writers, such as Marie de France, remain an exception.

persistent, and the encounter with the topos still emphasized the essential, fundamental dichotomization of men and women.

The apex of courtly love literature in the twelfth century represents a radical shift. Not merely did women play an enormous role in promoting literacy, they became well-established ‘consumers’ of fictional literature and poetry. Tales and romances presented more and more active and heroic female protagonists, with whom women could identify. Such narratives were not exempt from the traditional gender hierarchization, but they conveyed new sensibilities regarding women’s involvement and influence on social and intimate life. Hence, in the medieval variants of this topos, women usually gathered in order to offer specific resistance to man’s abuse of women (themselves or others), reexamining the definition of what could be conceived as comical.

One episode involving a league of women beating men is found in the twelfth-century romance *Cligès*, by Chrétien de Troyes. Some modern scholars entitled this work *La fausse morte* (The false dead woman),¹² because of the notable episode where Fénice, Cligès’s beloved and the wife of Emperor Alis, fakes her death so she can later be exhumed from her grave and run away with Cligès. This becomes possible thanks to the assistance of her servant Thessala, who concocts a potion that enables her to be buried for twenty-four hours. Before drinking the potion, Fénice pretends to be sick but declines to be examined by any doctor.¹³ Declared dead, she is mourned by the entire city, and just before the burial takes place, three physicians from Salerno arrive and convince the emperor that they can prove that Fénice is still alive. They are permitted to enter the church, where they use verbal solicitations and threats to force Fénice to admit her lie. When Fénice remains frozen, they torture her, whipping her with their lashes “Que il an font le sanc espandre”¹⁴ (until they shed the blood), and pouring boiling lead on her palms.¹⁵ Just then, a group of more than one thousand women, equipped with axes and hammers, violently break down the door, catch the physicians and defenestrate them, breaking their bodies into pieces.

¹² See, for example, Maurice Toesca, *Les chevaliers de la table ronde, 1, La fausse morte, [Cligès] 2, Lancelot du lac [Le chevalier de la charette]* (Paris: Albain Michel, 1964); Jean-Pierre Foucher translation *Cligès ou la fausse morte* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

¹³ Tovi Bibring, *The Patient, the Impostor and the Seducer: Medieval European Literature in Hebrew* Transcript, 11 (Oxford: Legenda, forthcoming), <http://www.mhra.org.uk/publications/Patient-Impostor-Seducer> (last accessed on May 5, 2023).

¹⁴ v. 5970.

¹⁵ Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, ed. Philippe Walter, in *Œuvres Complètes*, éd. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), texte 171–336. Translations are my own.

Ja la voloient el feu metre / Por rostir et por graillier, / Quant des dames plus d'un millier / Des genz se partent et desavoient; / A la porte vienent si voient / Par un petit de roverture / L'angoisse et la malaventure / Que cil feisoient a la dame, / Qui au charbon et a la flame / Li feisoient sosfrir martire. / Por l'uis brisier et desconfire / Aportent coignees et mauz. / Granz fu la noise et li assauz / A la porte brisier et fraindre. / S'or pueent les mires ataindre, / Ja lor sera sanz atandue. / Tote lor desserte rendue. / Les dames antrent el paleis, / Totes ansamble a un esleis, /... / Et les dames vont lor desserte / As trois mires doner et rendre; / N'i vostrement mander ne atendre / N'empereor ne seneschal; / Par les fenestres contreval / Les ont en mi la cort lancier, / Si que tuit troi ont peçoiez / Cos et costez et braz et james. / Einz mialz nel firent nules dames. / Or ont eü molt malemant / Li troi mire lor paiement, / Car les dames les ont paieiz (vv. 5998–6035).

[it was when they wanted to put her into the fire, to roast and grill her; then women, more than one thousand, departed and left the crowd. They came to the door and so they saw through a little slit the horror and the calamity that they were exercising on the lady, that they made her suffer the martyrdom of coal and flames. They brought, in order to break and tear down the door, hatchets and mallets. The clamor, the onslaught, to break and smash the door were enormous! If they could reach the doctors now, all their due would be given to them without delay. The ladies entered the palace, all of them together as if they were one....¹⁶ And the ladies go to pay and render them their dues! They were unwilling to summon or await emperor or seneschal. Through the windows, they threw all three doctors all the way down into the center of the courtyard, in such way that all three of them broke their neck, ribs, arms and legs. No lady has ever done better! Now the three physicians have received, so fiercely, their repayment, at the hands of the ladies!]

This stupefying scene, describing a mass of non-individualized women violently causing the death of three “erudite” men who were working for the ruler, was surprisingly dismissed in research, and the relatively small number of scholars who addressed it deemed it comical. D. W. Robertson Jr. parenthetically mentioned it as a “hilarious demise of the physicians at the hands of more than a thousand indignant ladies.”¹⁷ Laine E. Doggett added that “The narrator’s comment that the Salernitans got what they deserved only heightens the comedic nature of this scene.”¹⁸ While there are some farcical elements in this romance, and a well-

¹⁶ Here appears a section that tells of Thessala using the occasion to reach Fénice and comfort her meanwhile.

¹⁷ D. W. Robertson Jr., “The *Cligès* and the Ovidian Spirit” [1955], reprinted in his *Essays in Medieval Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 173–82.

¹⁸ Laine E. Doggett, *Love Cures: Healing and Love Magic in Old French Romance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 74. However, it should be noted that Doggett seems to be somewhat reluctant to embrace this point of view fully, but perhaps because of the prevalence of this opinion in scholarly research, feels obliged to acknowledge it and even accept it, to a certain degree, with statements such as: “Critics have noted the amusing elements of this episode and certainly they are there. Underneath the comedy, however, lie serious implications for medieval power relations and the use and misuse of knowledge.” *Ibid.*, 74.

known debate on its style (i. e., whether it is a parody or a courtly romance), there is no reason to dismiss this episode on the grounds of its supposed hilarity.¹⁹ While Fénice does not feel any physical pain, having taken a potion that numbs her neurological system, she clearly undergoes mental torment, as she is fully aware of what is happening to her. Later, she would also require a certain period of time to recover from her physical injuries. Likewise, the murder of the doctors would not engender pure laughter.²⁰ At most, and without disregarding the horrifying aspect of their punishment, it can arouse feelings of derision, as for a male audience it will generate a sense of stereotyped humiliation, similar to what we have seen in the Greek examples. The caricatural gap between their appearance as erudite, moralistic, and important men, and their murder by undistinguished (and also caricaturized, as we will see) women, makes theirs an undignified death. However, caricatures do not always serve as simple good-hearted humor.²¹

In *Cligès*, the confrontation between the doctors and the women is a showcase of some perceived gender conflict. The Salernitanos represent, by their actions, the feudal masculine world, whereas these women voice feminine resistance. The doctors enter the scene out of nowhere, as an incarnation of a sort of fraternity concerned with phallogocentric honor. They are not driven by a professional ambition to cure Fénice, but rather by a so-called moral concern. The setting in the church is revealing, as it conveys the idea that the doctors not only have the support of the emperor but also of the Lord. They compare Fénice to Solomon's wife, who, according to the legend, faked her death to escape her marriage.²² Solomon's wife repre-

19 On her sensory-depravation torture and on the impact of her physical abuse, see Tovi Bibring, "Molt les a fait amollir: émotions et manipulation dans le lai d'Ignauré," *Histoire d'entalerter: Les émotions dans le récit bref européen entre Moyen Âge et première modernité. Études réunies*, ed. Jean Devaux and Brîndușa Grigoriu (Fano: Aras Edizioni, 2022), 27–56. For surveys of the scholarship that perceives *Cligès*, and especially the *fausse morte* episode, as comical, see Doggett, *Love Cures* (see note 18), 74 and *ibid.* note 113, and in Bibring, *The Patient, the Impostor and the Seducer* (see note 13) where the comical effects of this episode, as well as its serious past, were studied in detail.

20 See Larissa Tracy's work on the French fabliaux, where she argues that for people living in medieval times, descriptions of extreme violence that surpassed the recurrent comical, harmless slapstick-like forms of violence, featuring brutal deeds of mutilation and castration, would not be perceived as comical, even if they were found in comical or parodical texts. Larissa Tracy, *Torture and Brutality in Medieval Literature, Negotiations of National Identity* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), 191–242.

21 See the classical work by Thomas Wright, *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (London: Virtue Brothers & Co., 1864).

22 This anecdote is extant in the twelfth century Spielmannsepos, *Salman und Morolf*, but as Jan M. Ziolkowski affirms "Chrétien would not have known the Middle High German poem itself, but rather a source (oral or written) that resembled it in at least this essential regard," *Solomon and*

sents female deceit, and this reference reinforces the fundamental gender gap. On one side is the masculine world order, composed of authority and control, and on the other the feminine world order, a world of ploys, rebellion, and desire. While the emperor is supposedly the supreme figure of the male world, he has already been manipulated by the women. The three physicians would be a poetical representation of his superego. They sense the truth, that Fénice is not dead. As the social compass, their role is to warn all the institutionalized establishments that are about to be harmed: The kingdom, the social order, religion, and every single husband whose wife has ever betrayed him. From their perspective, everything is permissible in their attempt to prevent such a direct attack on male honor.

Men's liberty to attack women who do not obey patriarchal order is not new. Arduous measures of this kind often serve as an etiological (and perhaps demagogical) warning. The novelty here is the use of the topos of the beating women as a contradiction to such male domination. On a smaller scale, the women band together to save one of their own, a woman who is being brutalized and is unable to defend herself. On its own, this is an interesting case of sisterhood. On a larger scale, they defy patriarchy. Reversing the emperor's permission to examine, interrogate, and torture his wife, they nullify his authority. Furthermore, as we have seen above, the scene takes place in the church. The sacred place would play an important role here, as it could be assumed that the final results will reflect the divine will. Previously, it seemed that the doctors operating inside God's dwelling were doing so in the name of the emperor, which was synonymous with operating in the name of God. The women question this symbiosis. For them, the martyrdom of Fénice could be seen as an act of sacrilege, which they are determined to stop.

Fénice's *fausse mort* shows how male supremacy, male morals, male science, and a male assumption that men operate in the name of God, could have been rethought by women. All these beliefs are challenged in the romance by women. Fénice disputed her position as an object deprived of any will, as she managed to avoid sexual relations with a man she does not desire, and marry her beloved.²³ Thessala shows that "women's medicine" is superior to scholarly male medicine.²⁴

Marcolf (see note 7), 334. There is also a mention of the legend in the twelfth-century *chanson de geste*, *Elie de Saint Gile*, where Elie recalls this legend and gives it as an example of a female ruse. vv. 1973–76.

²³ Fénice is not entirely rebellious. She embraces traditional sexual conventions assuming that a woman should never share her body with two men and safeguards her virginity for her wedding night, though not for Alis. There are also political justifications to Fénice's choice of Cligès but considering them here would be beyond the scope of this paper.

²⁴ Her potions protect Fénice from the doctors, and later cure her from the aftermath of their abuse. On Thessala and the urine analysis episode, see Bibring, *The Patient* (see note 13).

Finally, the league of women demonstrates that men's authority over women is not (or should not be) absolute, and that God does not tolerate the abuse of this authority.

In medieval reality, all these female triumphs were practically inconceivable. If Chrétien de Troyes demonstrates some sensitivity to women's conditions by the manner in which he develops these female characters and their success in confronting the males who dominate society, he also positions them in a secondary place, reminding readers of their subordinate status.²⁵ This status is easily sensed, as their deeds are always presented as inferior to what would have been manly and acceptable behavior; and hence seems to be less legitimate. Fénice did manage to find true love, but she did so by using cunning and ruses, manipulating and ridiculing her husband. Her servant, Thessala, has proven the superiority of her potions over scholarly medicine, but she too used trickery and white magic. The women curtailed the doctors' abuse of Fénice, perhaps even preventing her "real" death, but did so as criminals, burglarizing the church and contradicting the emperor's decree. Hence, despite the women's serious appearance and the important issues they represent, these were cloaked by a superficial and exaggerated description directly contrasting that of the doctors,²⁶ emphasizing stereotyped female shortcomings.

About a century later, a group of angry women will once again gather in a popular literary work and engage in violent actions with the intent to kill, though this time they will not go through with it. Twelve courtly ladies learn that they were all betrayed by the same man, who conducted love liaisons with them all simultaneously. Having a partner involved in multiple relations is a dominant factor of anxiety. For the betrayed individual it represents the loss of self-control and even of self-identity. In a religious discourse it is a sign of immorality, while in comedy it is the equivalent of an economic deficit.²⁷ In poetic discourse, it is a sign of infidelity and emotional neglect. A combination of all these different registers appears in the French *Lai d'Iguanré*, written by a certain Renaut.

25 Let us also note the ending of the romance, where Chrétien tells us that ever since this adventure took place, all the women of Constantinople had to wear the veil. See note above.

26 A thousand women vs three men, the tumult they make vs the horrifying calm with which the doctors proceed, their hammers vs to the doctors' instruments.

27 On the materialistic/economic aspect of sexuality in the fabliaux, see Sarah Melhado White, "Sexual Language and Human Conflict in Old French Fabliaux," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24.2 (1984): 185–210.

Drawing on the literary tradition of “*fin’amor*,”²⁸ the lai’s premise is that every courtly lady should have a “servant in love,” i.e., an extramarital suitor, a symbolic “vassal,” who will fill in the emotional, and sometimes the physical, void left by her husband (who is usually unloved).²⁹ Therefore, each of the twelve married ladies at the center of the tale conducts a love liaison. The tale starts with the ladies playing a game, in which one of them has “metamorphosized” into a priest, allowing her/him to hear eleven confessions and eventually decide who amongst them has the worthiest lover. Once the round of confessions has ended, the “priest” realizes that all of the ladies share one single lover, the knight Ignauré.³⁰

In the idealized world of *fin’amor*, the willing lovers enter a symbolic marriage based on their love, sometimes even exchanging rings as love tokens echoing wedding rings, and absolute loyalty echoing the concept of monogamy. The fact that Ignauré is not faithful to one lady functions, by mimesis, as an act of adultery. A second distortion of the *fin’amor* philosophy is Ignauré’s serial love affairs, which is rather a comical theme, contradicting the courtly ethos of eternal love for one lady.³¹ While each lady believes that she is partaking in an exalted love, in fact she is enamored with a renowned “womanizer” (and hence never a perfect *fin’amant*), who is quite an impostor.³²

28 Throughout the paper I use the term “*fin’amor*” as a general designation to the poetical conception of recreational love of without entering into the possible nuances between different types of “courtly love.”

29 The performance of “*fin’amor*” can be in the form of an exquisite theoretical love game. In such a case, the adulterous liaison does not include sexual relations, but rather is based on their longing for each other, conducting fine conversations and exchanging gifts. It can, however, also be physical, and the lady’s knight is also her lover. In any case, love is philosophically elevated, as the two partners get the chance to experience the purest, or as the notion of “*fin’amor*” indicates, the finest mode of love, granted freely out of personal choice, exempt of any interest or obligation such as the matrimonial debt or the production of heirs. This requires the lovers to practice eternal fidelity and exclusivity. In other words, the sexual side is theoretically secondary to the emotional one (even in cases where the love is consummated, such as the tales of Tristan and Iseult or Lancelot and Guinevere), and this implies that none of the partners can experience such love with any other.

30 On the tradition of medieval social games and particularly on the game in Ignauré, see Mathilde Grodet, “Respect et transgression des règles du jeu dans le lai d’Ignaure,” *Questes* 18 (2010): 78–86, and some new thoughts about it in Bibring, “Molt les a fait amolliier” (see note 19).

31 Tales about serial conquests of women (or about women with many lovers) belong usually either to comical/parodical texts or, if they appear in courtly texts, they are subject to criticism. Sexual multiplicity is connected to a materialistic view of love, which is incompatible with *fin’amor*.

32 On the scholarly debate whether Ignauré can be considered as a sincere ‘fin’amant’ despite his love for twelve women, see Bibring, “Molt les a fait amolliier” (see note 19).

Mortified by the betrayal, this symbolic adultery, they agree to exact revenge together and kill the philanderer. One of them conceives a plan: the first woman whom Ignaur  approaches will schedule a rendezvous with him, sharing the time and place with the other ladies. Equipped with knives, they will ambush Ignaur  together, surprising him in *flagrante delicto*, and execute him. This is the ladies' second transfiguration into a male world of action. Just as in their reality only male priests conducted the sacraments of confession and penance, thus compelling one of the ladies to "become" a male priest during their game, only betrayed husbands have the right to kill adulterous lovers, leaving the ladies no choice but to "become" cuckold husbands.

Reality, however, cannot be altered or ignored. Social order, including women's socially-perceived inferiority, will soon be restored. The encounter with the captured Ignaur , will clearly re-establish the gendered order in which the women abandon stereotyped masculine behavior and embrace the common feminine stereotypes. Once caught, Ignaur  emits fervent love discourses, after which he humbly accepts his death at the "lovely" hands of his mistresses, as a martyr of love.³³ His passion is answered with compassion, and Ignaur 's life is spared. The ladies demand that he cease his polyamorous conduct and choose one of them, a response that is perceived as feeble feminine behavior. Ignaur  chooses the woman who had acted as the priest, to whom I will refer from now on as the Chosen.

While this entire scene was taking place, a *losengier* who had witnessed everything informs the ladies' husbands of all that had occurred, and thus not only do the wives become aware of the "cheating," but so do their husbands.³⁴ The entire process of revenge is now translated, in a reversed mirror, into masculine colors. The husbands are also mortified and motivated by matters of love and honor. Their goal, to avenge their lost honor, is identical to that of their wives, and they too are determined to act together. One of the husbands devises a plan, which is quite indistinguishable from that conceived by the ladies. Ignaur  should be captured in the act of *flagrante delicto*, committing adultery with the chosen woman. The men's plan has one essential difference: only the chosen woman's husband should surprise Ignaur , arrest him and bring him to the others, to deliberate his punishment.³⁵ The plan is implemented, and when Ignaur  is brought to them, the hus-

33 "muir a si biele mains" (v.331).

34 A *losengier* is a well-known type of figure appearing in courtly literature as the enemy of the lovers, whose principal role is to inform husbands about their wives' acts of adultery.

35 Although Reanut uses bawdy puns at times, he remains decent in describing erotic situations, restricting the limits of what voyeurism can include. Thus, the chosen does not do anything more than kiss Ignaur  during the eleven ladies' ambush. While the formal explanation, that because of

bands decide to wait four days and then dismember Ignauré, cook his penis and heart and serve them to the ladies.³⁶

The juxtaposition of the two attacks, the women's and the men's, clearly reflects culturally hierarchized perceptions of gender. The women are presented as chaotic, fickle, and voluble, while the men are organized, determined, and reserved.³⁷ The women administer and are administered by speech. While equipped with knives, they stab Ignauré with their tongues, hurling accusations and declaring his certain death. They allow Ignauré to respond, i.e., permit more words to be heard, words that soften their hearts and bring them to revoke their initial plan.³⁸ Speech, on the other hand, is irrelevant to the men. At his capture, the Chosen's husband says to Ignauré "Ne deüsciés pas estre chi" (you shouldn't have been here, 493),³⁹ to which the latter replies by begging for mercy and acknowledging his wrongdoing (494–96). No further communication exists between Ignauré and the husbands. It is as if words are inferior to deeds, just as concepts (the abstract metaphors of love) are inferior to facts (the adultery, the mutilation, the cooking). By extension, it can be argued that the message conveyed here is that women are inferior to men in such matters, as they are enrooted in the pathetic and not in the

his infidelity she no longer desires him, makes complete sense, Renault would not describe a scene where all the women gaze at a couple making love. Likewise, the formal absence of all the husbands is justified by the so-called return to order, as Ignauré is now only the lover of the chosen woman. For a husband to catch his own wife in bed with her lover is conceivable, and in the Middle Ages it wouldn't require twelve men to assist in such a scene. Since the *flagrante delicto* required the presence of witnesses, the chosen's husband surprises the lovers with two witnesses, yet their anonymity and the fact that they are not part of the group of concerned men are an attenuation of the otherwise too upfront scene.

³⁶ The *lai* thus merges with the motif of the Eaten Heart, which has been expansively studied. See, e.g., Jean-Jacques Vincensini, "Figure de l'imaginaire et figure du discours. Le motif du cœur mangé dans la narration médiévale," *Le cuer au moyen âge. Réalité et senefiance* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 1991), 441–59. Milad Doueïhi, *A Perverse History of the Human Heart* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

³⁷ They are described as wildly jumping from all over and, furious, raising a tumult, or as "enraged" (v. 424).

³⁸ The precise verb used by Renault to denote their softening is *amolliier*, which derives from the Latin word *mulier* (a woman). According to medieval etymology, a woman is called "mulier" because she is soft in the sense of weak. See, for example, Isidore of Seville "the word woman (*mulier*) comes from softness (*mollities*)." The translation is quoted from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 242. On the women's emotionality in this *lai*, see Bibring, "Molt les a fait amolliier" (see note 19).

³⁹ Quotes are from Renault, "Ignauré" *Lais du moyen âge, récits de Marie de France et d'autres auteurs (XII^e–XIII^e siècle)*, ed. Philippe Walter (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), text 833–66, notice and notes 1323–30. Translations are my own.

pragmatic. Their words are powerless, their two declarations (kill Igauré / spare his life) do not lead to actions, as Igauré is not killed by them, but at the end, neither is his life spared.

The ladies' ambush and attack scene thus becomes somewhat comical, as it emphasizes the infantile perception of women, who easily surrender to emotional manipulation. The husbands achieve what the wives/mistresses could not, and the readers are once again reminded of the common medieval conception of a woman's limitation (i.e., women are spineless when it comes to emotions and desires) and men's absolute rational pragmatism (i.e., men plan and execute).

The intrinsic devaluation of women is manifested by the repeated blur of masculine/feminine attributes. The narrator and the eleven ladies acknowledge the Chosen's transfiguration into the role of the priest during their game, and mindfully and jovially refer to her/him as "sire prestres" (Mister priest, v. 106).⁴⁰ The *lo-sengier* uses this masculine simulacrum as ammunition to arouse the husbands' anger, telling them that they were all shamed by the same man, "Mais li une en est sire et mestre" (but [only] one [woman]⁴¹ is his lord and master, 414). Amplifying the masculinization of the Chosen from "priest" to "lord and master" is a pure provocation, an emasculating one, as it provides a direct assault on the husbands' masculinity. As opposed to the qualities and function of priests, who have no feminine equivalents, the words "lady" and "mistress"⁴² denote the equivalent feminine forms and positions of lord and master. They have, according to the *fin'amor* ideology, an additional metaphorical meaning. In a poetic reversal of the feudal positions, the beloved becomes the sovereign and owner (owning him poetically, in the sense that his heart belongs to her) of her suitor. It would seem that the *lo-sengier* intentionally distorts this meaning, when he superfluously uses the masculine "his lord and master" to refer to the amorous relationship between the Chosen and Igauré, despite the fact that he has at his disposal acceptable feminine terms. His goal, of course, is to incense the husbands by implying that they are not the "men of the manor."⁴³

⁴⁰ See also Li maistres v. 105; Li prestre v. 116; 156; 184, 196; "Sire" v. 127; Au prestre v. 138; 201.

⁴¹ Obviously, the gender blurring works much better in French, where the feminine form of "one" (li une) is conjugated, oxymoronically, with the masculine forms of sire and master.

⁴² "Mistress" is used in the sense of "a mistress" as of the seventeenth century.

⁴³ Men dreading the idea that their wives "will wear the trousers" is a current theme in medieval literature. In addition to the husbands' symbolic emasculation, it is possible to see here a hint to Igauré's castration. Furthermore, in medieval moralistic thought, a womanizer is not considered to be a model of manhood. On the contrary, he is compared to a woman because of his sexual appetite. See Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (2005; London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 178.

The husbands do not remain indifferent to such stimulus and begin to act immediately.⁴⁴ Resonating with the *losengier*'s linguistic befuddlement of the genders, the Chosen's husband tells his wife after she has eaten Ignauré: "Dame prestresse, / Ja fustes vous sa maïstress" (vv.565–6). The result of this feminization of the locution/formulation "sire prestres" into "dame prestresse" is demeaning, as it denotes the lady's inadequacy, emphasizing the fact that she is not, and never was, a real priest. There are simply no priestesses in Christian Catholicism, nor is there, or perhaps therefore there is not, a word to denote it. The female form "prestresse" usually refers, mostly mockingly, to the supposedly celibate priest's concubine, and by extension to a harlot.⁴⁵ In another sarcastic reference to the adultery that has taken place, here the husband implies the debased nature of his wife, who wished to be a priest but could only be a despised "priestess," i.e., a lecherous woman.⁴⁶ The husband then restores the patriarchal lost honor by restoring the *losengier*'s "master" to the feminine form. No woman should be called "master" nor have the option of being an "owner in love" (mistress) of another man.

The fantastical presentation of women killing a transgressive man results here in an incomplete experience. The defeat is inscribed in an environment that belittles women, where women are conceived as naturally mentally weak, and defenseless against excessive words of lust and flattery. There is, however, a radical shift in this tale. If the tale's first part was somewhat ludicrous in tone and perverted the poetical themes of the *fin'amor* and the eaten heart by the superfluous additions (not one woman but many, not merely the heart but also the penis), it is rectified in the second part. The ladies have corrected Ignauré's transgressive behavior and the Chosen represents his re-adherence to the laws of courtly love.⁴⁷ With that, the tone changes, and although it is not entirely exempt from bawdiness, it is significantly sublimated. The perception of women also dramatically changes. Despite the

44 The minute the *losengier* departs, the husbands decide that they "De cest chastiel avront dangier" (will have domination of this castle v. 449). This verse contains an obvious *quidproquo* between the castle and the women. Perhaps this is the reason for Walter's translation "de ce château, ils sauront bien se rendre maîtres" (of this castle, they will know well how to become masters. 855).

45 Some medieval narratives use "prestresse" as priestess only when referring to the pagan priestesses while rewriting pagan mythological accounts. In our tale, "prestresse" first appeared when used by the narrator to refer to the Chosen in the episode of Ignauré's capture by the ladies: "La prestresse parla premiers" (the prestress was the first to talk, 285). While there may be here a dose of mordancy, it would seem that the use of the term is more neutral, maybe even somewhat affectionate, and reflects nothing of the husband's deliberated humiliating and harsh sarcasm. I study the figure of the *prestresse* in "Riding the Black Mare, Casting Away a Hungry Rat: The Priest's Concubine in Medieval Folklore" (forthcoming).

46 The pun is obviously lost in translation.

47 On the ladies as a possible reflection of one, see further below.

fact that there was finally a Chosen, the eleven other ladies were also punished for their adultery and unknowingly participated in the cannibalistic eating of Ignauré's body. Informed of his demise by the Chosen, they accepted her invitation to grieve together. They lament Ignauré's death, their discourses fueled this time by pain and sorrow rather than anger.⁴⁸ The ladies finally take action, yet the action they have agreed upon is non-action, as the ladies refuse to eat and starve to death on the altar of love.

The ladies die a triumphant death, as it demonstrates the women's emancipation from the men's subjection, while their feminine "non-action" countermands their husbands' cruel punishments. But much more than merely triumphing by "not being," which can be viewed by modern eyes as the women's effacement, their death symbolizes complete destruction, destroying the entire household. As food and eating serve here as metaphorical to sex,⁴⁹ the women's hunger strike is reminiscent of *Lysistrata*, with which I began this paper. As we have seen, the Greek wives, led by Lysistrata, go on a sex strike. Although they do not exercise any physical violence, withholding sexual relations is also a form of violence, as it threatens the men's lives by preventing them from having legitimate heirs. Metaphorically then, the wives' starving is an annihilation of the patriarchal values the men so fiercely defended, as nothing remains from the marriages they wished to safeguard. It is the ultimate battle in this war between the sexes, another female organized attack, this time on the patriarchal order, on their husbands, who lose the battle by remaining alone and heirless. In this sense, the readers/listeners of the tale are expected to regain their fascination with the feminine lofty idealism. Under the light of the poetic fantasy of true fine love, where women and men take equal part, women's ultimate sacrifice, in the name of such love, deems them heroic.

I would like to end the present redaction with a tale that was composed in Hebrew, in thirteenth-century Spain, by Yaakov Ben Elazar. While there is no concrete evidence regarding Yaakov's familiarity with *Lai d'Ignauré*, his *Tale of Old Bearded Achbor* provides a brilliant case study for comparison. The tale's narrator, Lemuel, recounts how he once followed a suspicious preacher named Achbor to his house and discovered his deceitful behavior. Hiding from view, Lemuel found out that the

⁴⁸ Bibring, "Molt les a fait amolliier" (see note 19).

⁴⁹ On the sexual meaning of the ladies eating Ignauré's phallic body, see Vincensini op. cit and Simon Gaunt, "Exposing the Secrets of the Heart in Medieval Narrative," *Exposure: Revealing Bodies, Unveiling Representations*, ed. K. Banks and J. Harris. Modern French Identities, 29 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 109–23. See also Amy Heneveld, "Eating your Lover's Otherness: The Narrative Theme of the Eaten Heart in the *Lai d'Ignauré*," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 36 (2018): 393–412.

impostor, whom he had just seen preaching against corruption in the city plaza, was secretly leading a corrupt life. Excessively rich from the alms collected from his congregation, he lived in an extravagant palace where he was entertained by four beautiful maidens. The nature of Achbor's relationship with the maidens remains obscure, as in the midst of their erotic amusements, Achbor fell asleep and the maidens dispersed. Once alone, Achbor quietly called a black woman, and thus Lemuel learned his best-kept secret: Achbor had another (and an "Other") mistress! Lemuel saw this as an abhorrent transgression and burst into the palace, beating the lovers and tearing off their clothes. He then engaged Achbor in conversation, trying to convince him to return to the right path by getting rid of the black woman in favor of a white one. Achbor ignored Lemuel's pleas and replied using insolent language. Lemuel shouted out of despair and, hearing his cry, the four maidens returned and discovered the truth about Achbor. They killed him and threw his body in a pit.⁵⁰

The exaggerated number of women in the two tales works as a literary means to emphasize the protagonist's corruption. We have seen how *Ignauré's* polyamory is a sign of his debauchery, not of his courtliness.⁵¹ Achbor's four maidens are a sign of his religious hypocrisy. The abundance of women is therefore superfluous, exaggerating and dramatizing the situation, emphasizing, somewhat comically, the promiscuous nature of unsatiated men, in what seems to be a topos of comical and farcical narratives.

Both texts also tell of a severe reaction to the revelation of the transgression, simultaneously undergone by the representatives of the two sexes. In *Ignauré*, the ladies were the first to learn about the protagonist's sexual behavior and to deal with it, replacing physical violence with speech. Their attempt to reform *Ignauré* failed not merely because speech is conceptual while actions are pragmatic, but also because speech is identifiable with women, while actions are within the realm of masculine behavior. Finally, the husbands completed what the ladies had initiated and then abandoned. This part of *Ignauré* shows how patriarchal order is re-established, as men regain domination of their women and their castle by bringing social order back to its "natural" (or sociably accepted) place.

In *Achbor*, Lemuel is the first to react, doing so in a manner imitating the behavior of a cuckold husband. Here, the adultery is merely symbolic, as Achbor's liaison with the black mistress is offensive to Lemuel, who represents the tradi-

⁵⁰ A thorough study of this tale and of all these motifs can be found in my *The Tale of Old Bearded Achbor: A Close-Reading of an Overwhelming Story* (Amiens: Centre d'études médiévales de Picardie, in print) from which the translations here are quoted.

⁵¹ To be more precise, the central conflict in *Ignauré's* first part is his betrayal of the courtly love ideals.

tional moral order compromised by Achbor's deviation (and in that sense, he incarnates Achbor's husband conceptually and not sexually). Adhering to an "Other" culture and embracing paganism is thus superficially blurred with adultery, as the Other in this case is a woman, and everything hints that the two are involved in a sexual romance. As a "husband" capturing the lovers in the act, Lemuel first turns to violence and then verbalizes his anger, which here too proves to be futile. Having no other means at his disposal, Lemuel expresses his emotions with a cry of despair. The maidens, however, are much more pragmatic. They use speech but only unilaterally, as they hurl fierce accusations at Achbor. Achbor does not get the chance to reply before he is beaten to death. Furthermore, his execution is described literally as "the judgment of the adulteresses."

The expected gendered roles are thus entirely confused. The two men are somewhat demasculinized. Lemuel does not fulfill the expectations of a "cuckold husband" or as a didactic moralist, as his attempts to correct Achbor are ineffective. Achbor is effeminated as he undergoes acts of humiliation usually intended for women. First, his beard is shaven, symbolically emasculating him. In her aforementioned study of popular culture in ancient Greece, Forsdyke commented that the prevalent punishment for adulterers was to effeminize them, as recorded in Aristophanes's plays. One manner of doing so was to remove their pubic hair:

...the subjection of the adulterer to genital depilation put him symbolically in the position of a woman, since the plucking of pubic hair was a common feature of female personal grooming.⁵²

Forcible hair removal, as Achbor endures, is thus a ritual of humiliation, attacking a common signifier of masculinity. Second, his gender is sarcastically blurred in an act of speech as the narrator relates to him as an adulteress. Third, he is killed by women, which, as we have seen, is culturally perceived as a demeaning punishment. Ironically, the four maidens become Achbor's judges and executioners, traditionally considered masculine roles.

While current standards of scholarly research, if not entirely preventing us from speculations, they do restrict them dramatically. I would have loved to argue that *Achbor* is very much inspired by *Ignauré*, transforming it from a courtly tale into a somewhat allegorical one. The French tale remains about love, while the Hebrew tale deals mostly with religious hypocrisy and the threat of assimilation. Yet, they both deal with the revelation of a transgressor and his trial by the two gendered parties, men and women, whose borders are constantly blurred. In both tales, women behave like men. Social phallogocentric reality imposes itself in

52 Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales* (see note 3).

Ignauré and the women fail in their attempt to punish the transgressor. Yet is it really a failure to be merciful? Are not mercy and compassion Christian values? Are they specifically feminine attributes from a theological perspective? While these questions surely deserve further discussion, the literal reading of the text gives the impression that failure is inherent in the intentional descriptions that belittle women, as we have seen above. It is only in the tale's second part that female solidarity becomes a serious matter, and that pathetic rhetoric is orchestrated within the exquisite stream of the love discourse. The women relinquish their attempt to act like men and return to their feminine behavior. As women, they can merely act violently toward themselves. In this they are triumphant, but they are no more.

In *Achbor*, the women are successful in their implementation of violence, but isn't it precisely because of the unrealistic tone, the carnivalesque notion of "the world turned upside down" setting of the tale? Furthermore, as I argued elsewhere, the four maidens are a reflection of patriarchal standards.⁵³ In other words, in both of the tales the women's success or failure are flexible ideas. As for *Achbor*, the women's so-called success may serve as a lesson regarding the fate that awaits immoral people.

While scenes of men abusing women physically, verbally and mentally were a quite common occurrence, women exercising violence over men is a rare and intriguing theme. In the medieval phallocentric society, in which women were perceived as the physically and spiritually weaker sex, the thought of women beating men was somewhat inconceivable. Sandy Bardsley notes that:

... scenes of women beating men were often considered humorous in medieval literature and art... a woman beating a man represented a reversal of the supposedly natural order of things.⁵⁴

53 Bibring, *The Tale of Old Bearded Achbor* (see note 50).

54 Sandy Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages* (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 140. See, for example, the exceedingly scatological twelfth-century French parody of a *chanson de geste*, *Audigier*: Grimberge, a perverse old woman, initiates a confrontation with the knight Audigier, and on the several occasions in which he comes to seek revenge, she constantly beats and overpowers him. When Grimberge first harasses Audigier, he threatens her and then asks his valet who she is. The valet replies: "Sire, el a non Grimberge, pas ne vos ment. / Molt est mauvaise, vielle et mesdisant. / Ne la menaciez pas plus longuement, / Que se ele crie aïide isnelement / Ja i venrra de vielles plus de cent. / Ge cuit que la plus joene ait bien d'anz .c., / Si n'i a nules d'eles qui ait nul dent. / Ne vos garentiroient voz garnement" [Sire, I tell you no lie, her name is Grimberge. She is extremely evil, old and slanderous. Do not menace her anymore, for if she calls for help, more than one hundred old women will be here immediately. I believe that the youngest among them must be about one hundred years old, and none of them has one tooth left. Your shields will not protect you!]. "Audigier" in *L'épopée pour rire: Le voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem*.

The case studies in this meditation demonstrated that the (male) authors who did include episodes of women killers in hybrid texts usually did borrow elements from the literary instruments of comedy. While the physicians' defenestration in *Cligès* is not, in my eyes, a laughing matter, there is a somewhat caricatural description of the scene. While *Ignaurè* ends up in genuine tragedy, the women's failure to execute their 'manly' plan can be perceived from a misogynistic perspective as somewhat ridiculous. While *Achbor*'s four maidens cruelly beat the transgressor to death, their use of sardonic language replete with sexual and scatological injuries, and the extravagant portrait of the bearded imposter, bestow the atmosphere of carnivalesque narration. It should also be noted that the aggressive women in this paper, including the Greek examples, are not female warriors. Rather, they are wives, mothers, and mistresses, women whose femininity, in the traditional, patriarchal perception of the term, is beyond question.⁵⁵ Hence, their attempt to challenge the phallogentric patriarchal society and resist the masculine established order was received or interpreted with derision, as if to show that this cannot really happen. Such enunciations would just be another expression of the archaic, archetypal, fear from the emasculating, *femme fatale* who one day may be gathered with her sister not only to blur the gendered order, but also to eliminate men.

salem et à Constantinople et Audigier, ed. Alain Corbellari (Paris: Champion Classiques, 2017) 202–41.

55 As opposed to narratives of women-warriors, where the feminine attributes are obscured or entirely erased.

Revital Refael-Vivante

On the Heavenly and the Earthly, the Secular as Sacred – A New Reading of Medieval Hebrew Fables

Abstract: This article offers some insights regarding the conceptions of holy and secular in one of the popular medieval Hebrew books of fables: *Meshal HaQadmoni* (The Fable of the Ancient) by Isaac ben Shlomo Ibn Sahula, composed in Castile in 1281. Although Ibn Sahula was a biblical scholar and even engaged in Kabbalah, he also practiced medicine and was knowledgeable regarding contemporary scientific theories and mindsets. Thus, he had a broad worldview, and his writing corresponds to the general context of his time and place. I discuss Ibn Sahula's references to sacred and secular issues within the context of the medieval general and Jewish cultural perception and illustrate the synthesis between the concepts of sacred and secular in Meshal HaQadmoni.

Keywords: *Meshal HaQadmoni*; *mitzvot*; Radak; Rashi; redemption; religious controversy; fear of God

In his book *Fra Ginepro's Leg of Pork*, Aviad Kleinberg devotes the first chapter to the subject of sacredness, *Kdusha* in Hebrew.¹ He explains that the root of the word, K.D.S., expresses separation and uniqueness. This means that when we sanctify something, we separate it from other things in the same category. This separation is usually related to *Hakdashah*, “dedication,” the transfer of the object in question to someone or something else.²

A careful examination of the roles of the sacred and secular in space during the medieval period, indicates a blurring of boundaries.³ The word “boundary” denotes the marking and delimitation of the object to which it refers, and is close in

1 Aviad Kleinberg, *Fra Ginepro's Leg of Pork: Christian Saints' Stories and Their Cultural Role* (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan, 2000), 15–22 [Hebrew].

2 Kleinberg, *Fra Ginepro's Leg of Pork* (see note 1), 15. See also Aviad Kleinberg, “Saints,” *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion* (Washington, DC: Sage Publications, 1988), 2, 664–67. On the concept of “sanctity” and “holiness,” see *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures: New Essays*, ed. Lawrence Besserman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Introduction: 1–5.

3 Besserman also discusses the blurring of boundaries, the flow from one concept to the other, and the constant correspondence between them. Besserman, *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures* (see note 2), 5–15.

its meaning to other words, such as “beginning” and “end.”⁴ During the Middle Ages, all aspects of life in Europe were imbued with religious representations. All spheres of life and every element of the foundations of culture were tinted with the religious hues. Johan Huizinga explains that during this period, the connection to Jesus and the fear of God were constantly emphasized in connection to everything and every action. Everything was subject to the concept of religion, and faith spread with tremendous momentum. But, as Huizinga explains, even in an atmosphere saturated with sacredness, it is impossible for heightened religious tension to prevail constantly, i.e. at a level of true transcendence, perpetual elation and unceasing intensity. When this tension is absent, boundaries become blurred: everything that is meant to arouse the awareness of God becomes the essence of worldliness, an everyday and banal essence, materiality clad in spirituality. The sacred becomes the secular that is seemingly sacred, the heavenly becomes earthly that is seemingly spiritual.⁵

In his book *Categories of Medieval Culture*, Aron Gurevich describes the duality in the medieval worldview, which is also reflected in the perception of the sacred and the secular. On the one hand, the medieval worldview was characterized by completeness and the inability to dismantle it into separate areas. This is the basis for the unity of the universe. The individual represented all of society in areas such as theology and history. That is, the eternal was perceived even in a fleeting event. Similarly, man is perceived as an indivisible unity of all those elements from which the world is built. He is the ultimate goal of creation. The complete whole exists in every little detail; The microcosm is a duplication of the macrocosm.⁶ On the other hand, despite its overall completeness, the medieval perspective is not necessarily harmonious and devoid of contradictions. The contrasts between the eternal and the fleeting, the sacred and the impure, mind

4 David Gurvitz and Dan Arav, *Encyclopedia of Ideas: Culture, Thought, Media* (Tel Aviv: Babel Publications, 2012), 219 [Hebrew].

5 Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (The Waning of the Middle Ages), translated from Dutch into Hebrew by Carla Perlstein (1919; Jerusalem: Carmel, 2009), 118. Barbara Newman also claims that while the “sacred” held a central role that included and encompassed all aspects of life, the secular realm was in a niche of its own. See Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), viii. In the introduction, she describes the correspondence and constant dialogue between the two terms and explains that in the medieval world the definition of the “secular” is always reached through its varied manners of correspondence with the “sacred” (iv). In the first chapter of the book, she examines the relationship between the concepts of sacred and secular in the Middle Ages against the background of a broad theoretical base (1–53).

6 Aron Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*, translated from Russian into Hebrew by Peter Kriksunov (1984; Jerusalem: Academon, 1993), 18–19.

and body, heavenly and earthly, all which provide the basis for the medieval worldview, stemmed from the social life of the period – uncompromising contrasts between wealth and poverty, freedom and enslavement, superiority and inferiority. Gurevich explains that the medieval Christian worldview expunged these real contrasts, eliminating the gaps by shifting them to the upper plane of supra-earthly categories. On the supra-earthly plane contradictions could be resolved (i.e. eradicated) only at the end of days, that is, in the heavenly world, as a result of atonement for the sins of the concrete earthly world. Only in this manner can the world be reformed and returned to eternity. Thus, theology had given medieval society not only the “supreme generalization” but also “approval,” justification, and sanctification.⁷

In this article, I will offer some insights regarding the conception of holy and secular in *Meshal HaQadmoni* by Isaac ben Shlomo Ibn Sahula, written in Hebrew in Castile in 1281.⁸ This is the first secular Hebrew book to be published with illustrations. It is also unique because of the animal images presented in the fables, which the author paints in a Jewish “hue.” Although Isaac Ibn Sahula was a biblical scholar and even engaged in Kabbalah, he also practiced medicine and was knowledgeable in the scientific theories and mindsets of his time. Therefore, he had a broad worldview and his writing corresponds with the general context of his time and place. Ibn Sahula was quite occupied with the issue of the sacred and the secular, as expressed even in the opening poem and the two introductions he wrote for *Meshal HaQadmoni*.⁹ The name he chose for his book, *Meshal HaQad-*

7 Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture* (see note 6), 19.

8 Revital Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim: Meshal HaQadmoni le-isaac Ibn Sahula, Castilia 1281* (A Treasury of Fables: Isaac ibn Sahula’s *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Castile, 1281) (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2017) [Hebrew]. The most popular edition of *Meshal Haqadmoni* among scholars is the Zmora edition: Isaac Ibn Sahula, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Israel Zmora edition (Tel Aviv: Mahbarot Lesifrut, 1952) [Hebrew]. See also the English version: Isaac Ibn Sahula, *Meshal Haqadmoni – Fables from the Distant Past, A Parallel Hebrew-English Text*, ed. and trans. Raphael Loewe, 2 vols. (Oxford and Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004). All quotes in this article are from the Loew edition. See also Sara Offenberg, “On a Pious Man, Adulterous Wife, and the Pleasure of Preaching to Others in Isaac Ibn Sahula’s ‘Meshal ha-Qadmoni,’” *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 12 (2016): 103–25; eadem, “On Heresy and Polemics in Two Proverbs in Meshal Haqadmoni,” *Jewish Thought* 1 (2019): 49–78 [Hebrew].

9 *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Zmora Edition (see note 8) has two introductions that serve as a kind of interpretive key to understanding this special book: The first is the book’s introduction (*Meshal Haqadmoni*, Loew edition, part 1, 8–19) in which the author discusses, among other things, the book’s goals, advantages, and virtues; The other is the introduction to the first gate (ibid., 20–39) which contains the book’s frame story and serves as a link to the first gate. On the role of the author’s introduction as a key to understanding a literary work, see Revital Yeffet-Refael, “Author’s Intro-

moni (The Fable of the Ancient) also contains a riddle that, when deciphered, informs us of his worldview. Ibn Sahula felt it important to declare and note in various places that all the messages of the book are sacred, while the secular only serves as a cover. He therefore tells of the layers, meanings and messages inherent in his book at the book's beginning. He uses the fable as an artistic means that essentially has multiple meanings and layers. An in-depth examination of the places where the author's clear and distinct voice is heard shows that he seeks to guide his audience to concentrate on the book's religious-didactic and contemplative messages and not on the illustrations and animal fables, which provide no more than an amusing cover. Here, I will discuss Ibn Sahula's references to sacred and secular issues within the context of the medieval general and Jewish cultural perception, and illustrate the synthesis between the concepts of sacred and secular in *Meshal HaQadmoni*.

Sacred and Secular in the Opening Poem and Introduction

Meshal HaQadmoni can be read in two readings: one focusing on the visible layer – as a fun book of fables; And the other on the hidden layer – a book with deep messages: worldviews, religious and philosophical principles and sharp social criticism. The author describes the aristocratic qualities of his book as a fine wine, a cache of gold and a hidden treasure (1:6–7). He also hints at the hidden messages in the book in the opening poem, titled “Kumu Re'im” (stand up, friends ... :)¹⁰

Enigmas it propounds; and he
That extricates himself, is free
From his (and from my) foe.
With lion's heart, it shall eclipse
Books issuing from foreign lips,
Of bastard birth, I trow ...
These riddles stumbling stragglers lead
To a stout refuge, as they read
Fables from long ago.
(1: 6–7, verses 5–6 and 14)

ductions in the Hebrew *Maqama* and Its Variations,” *Criticism & Interpretation* 39 (2006): 125–68 [Hebrew].

10 For an analysis of the opening poem, see Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 118–25.

In the opening poem, Ibn Sahula tells of the cryptic dimension concealed within this book. With these words, he announces the existence of the book's hidden layers, which include the messages and ideas he wishes to teach his audience. In the book's introduction, which serves as an interpretive index, Ibn Sahula writes:

Come, choose your words, a causeway hither raise,
From me receive these tales of ancient days,
My cherished, golden treasure; ye shall find
Thereto appended parables, designed
To mirror daily life, in which oblique
Hints to develop understanding speak;
The Torah's holiness lies near its heart
That angels, climbing up and down, important.
Con it each month, each day: pious folk treat
Their common food as sacred when they eat.¹¹

With these words, the author reveals a central clue to solving the riddle, which is an important component of understanding the book. While in the external visible layer the animal fables are secular, in the hidden layer they carry words of sanctitude and the bible. In addition, Ibn Sahula hints at an even deeper layer, Kabbalistic messages encrypted in the fables.¹² He compares the fables to "secular matters treated as if all the restrictions of sacred matters applied to them."¹³ This Mishnaic term refers to the transformation of food that is not sacred to food that is, i.e. transforming the secular into the sacred. In this manner Ibn Sahula asks that his book be transformed from secular to sacred, possibly hinting that the book is a form of food for his audience's soul. The use of fables as receptacles for hidden messages is evident also within the book itself. Ibn Sahula explains that fables allow for the interpretation of hidden messages with familiar means (1: 96–97) and seems to be referring to deep layers of meanings, possibly mystical, that derive from the very nature of the fable as enigmatic and sometimes obscure.

In the two openings (especially in the Introduction) the author lists a number of main motives and goals for writing the book, which are intertwined and related

¹¹ Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 12–13.

¹² See Isaac F. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1965), 119 [Hebrew].

¹³ The phrase "secular matters treated as if all the restrictions of sacred matters applied to them" is a halachic reference to food that has no sacred connotation, meaning it is not intended for priests, but its owner decided to treat it as sacred food, which must not be defiled and must not be eaten while impure. The purpose of this act is to be punctilious regarding sacredness and purity. The source of the phrase is from the Mishnah, Tractate Taharot 2; Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Cholin, 2 A, Tractate Pesachim, 33B.

to the realm of the sacred and the religious world. Here we learn that the author bases his actions on a personal motive, his repentance when he became thirty-seven years of age (2: 696–97).¹⁴ In his writing, he describes a personal upheaval that led him to mend his ways and repent. He expresses remorse for the sins of his youth, yet we cannot ignore the fact that his mindset was most probably influenced by a widespread religious awakening that prevailed among the Jews of Castile in his time.¹⁵ The personal motive is joined by a moral-religious goal – a call to the book's Jewish audience to undergo a religious awakening and repent. The author reminds the people of his lofty lineage and his holy origins by addressing them directly (1: 8–11). He reprimands the people that they have betrayed the sacred, abandoned the Torah and its *mitzvot* and deserted the holy language. The people respond to the author, claiming that the Torah is difficult to understand and is sealed and unwelcoming, and therefore they make do with the technical observance of the laws and commandments in a manner lacking any spiritual essence and content. They justify their difficult situation by referring to their exile. In his answer, Ibn Sahula seeks to reconnect the people to their roots and traditions, also hinting at the redemption of Israel.¹⁶

Another goal that motivated Ibn Sahula to write his book is a national-cultural goal, seen in his attempt to motivate the people to return to the Hebrew language and thus restore the lost dignity of the sacred language (1: 8–9).¹⁷ As a result of forgetting the sacred language, Hebrew, the people are drawn to the books of others: Greeks, Arabs, Christians and more, as well as to foreign wisdom and fables (1: 12–13). He seeks to purify them culturally and spiritually and lead them back to their holy sources.

Thus peradventure they shall find their heart
 Drawn to essentials by my goad, and lay
 Aside their Homer, and will put away
 What heretics and what free-thinkers say.
 (1: 16–17)

The author protests contemporary Jews' pursuit of foreign literature, translated literature meant to amuse, some of which is illustrated with colorful and eye-catch-

¹⁴ Ibn Sahula mentions his age in the epilogue.

¹⁵ Jefim Shirman, *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christian Spain and Southern France* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 345–46 [Hebrew].

¹⁶ Redemption is one of the book's main themes. See Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 336–42.

¹⁷ Medieval Hebrew authors had a common motive to restore the forgotten Hebrew language to its previous glory.

ing illustrations. Ibn Sahula would like his book to serve as a substitute for this form of literature and therefore he adds illustrations as a means of attracting the readers' attention. The illustrations are also meant to encourage and comfort the book's intended audience, who are suffering in exile. In order to encourage his audience to return to their Jewish origins, Ibn Sahula Judaizes the animal figures. Although he uses various tactics and manipulations to attract the attention and hearts of his recipients, his goal is to teach his people wisdom through his book. He presents wisdom and good advice at the center of the book both as an important means and as a goal he has set for himself to achieve and fulfil the messages and meanings presented in the book. To make his moral and guiding messages accessible, the author writes the book in a manner that can be understood by all, in the hope that in doing so his mission will be successful. The book was probably dedicated to his rabbis,¹⁸ but in fact it was written with a didactic goal and meant for all people, be they old (smart) or young.

Ibn Sahula wrote his book with polemical intentions and against the backdrop of the religious controversy between Jews and Christians that took place in Christian Spain in the mid-thirteenth century. The introduction contains hints to the debates that took place during the author's time, which become clearer through the polemical opening poem preceding the introduction, "Kumu Re'im" (stand up, friends). In the poem, Ibn Sahula declares that his book will provide an answer to the enemies of Israel, hinting at the religious controversy between Jews and Christians.¹⁹

A careful analysis of *Meshal HaQadmoni* reveals another of the book's goals that the author does not explicitly state in the introductions – a desire for social improvement, including social equality, social justice and love among all people. An analysis of the debates between the author and the *makshim* (questioners), the cynics, embedded in the fables reveals a harsh and poignant social critique of figures in the community, their behavior and functioning. The author sharply attacks pretenders and hypocrites as well as arrogant and powerful rulers who burden the weak. In addition, the social critique is of great importance from the author's perspective, as he strives for the improvement of social morality that is linked to religious morality (religious commandments that refer to the relationship between one man and another) and on an individual level, and considers these necessary conditions for repentance and redemption.²⁰

18 This is evident in the opening poem at the beginning of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, *ibid*, 2–3.

19 Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 118–25.

20 Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), ch. 7.

The concluding poem that seals the introduction summarizes the main ideas and artistic means of the book, which the author mentioned in the opening poem and the introduction. This is undoubtedly a poem of contemplation clad in sacred attire:

The soul's perfection did all last reject
 With shudders, begging it be kept away
 From her gate-posts. Mark thou, my soul, the way,
 With heart intent to mount aloft, direct
 Thy course: on heaven's door lean, to effect
 An entrance. Once within the palace, say
 Return, thou Hebrew tongue, return, display
 The vantage! We would gaze on thee, unchecked
 Our eyes of admiration, to inspect
 Thine excellence, the tribute thou dost pay
 To God – thy fables, splendor of word-play
 That thou in song and riddle dost affect.
 Long mayest thou great feats of intellect
 Perform; may discipline and wisdom stay
 With thee, then shalt thou (with such friends as they)
 Spurning all fools, leave folly's castle wrecked. (1: 18–19)

The poem has five stanzas,²¹ each expressing and summarizing a different idea: four of the poem's stanzas deal with matters of essence and content (morality and sacredness) while only one stanza deals with the artistic means (form). The ratio of "form" in the book to "content and essence," in favor of the latter, is deliberate, as we shall see below: the first stanza deals with abandoning the foolishness of this world; the second with repentance; the third stanza with reestablishing the honor of the holy language; the fourth stanza tells of the artistic means used by the author, such as riddles, fables and Hebrew poems. The fifth and final stanza is written as a summary: Wisdom and morality that are used as means (but also as a goal) to encourage repentance and eradicate stupidity and folly from the people.

The Name of the Book: *Meshal HaQadmoni*

The book's two layers – the visible (secular) and the hidden (sacred) – are reflected in the title the author has given his book. On the visible layer, the name "*Meshal HaQadmoni*," "the Fable of the Ancient," is an understandable choice and befits the content of the book, defined by its author as "a book of fables" that is a con-

21 The word marked in bold letters signifies the beginning of a verse.

tinuation of the ancient fable literature. From the hidden layer's perspective, the name is not simplistic at all but has deep meaning, since the fable is, by its very nature, enigmatic and is written in indirect language. The phrase "the fable of the ancients" is a *shibutz*²² from David's words to Saul: "As saith the proverb of the ancients: Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness; but my hand shall not be upon thee" (I Samuel, 24: 13–14).

The book's author seems to be referring mainly to the second part of the verse, "Out of the wicked ...," which is a hidden *shibutz*.²³ The missing syntactic part contains an essential message that becomes clear in the interpretation of these verses, which is a key component to understanding the choice of the book's name and the messages it contains. Three biblical commentators offered a classical medieval interpretation of the meaning of "the fable of the ancient": Rashi, Radak and R. Yosef Kara.²⁴ Thus we learn that the book's name is quite significant: the author seeks to create an affinity between his book and superior sources that precede it. The first and sublime source is the Torah, which is God's fable, and thus God is the first fabler. This affinity provides the book and its author credibility and validity, allowing him to stand on the shoulders of giants.²⁵ It is consistent with the author's statement in the introduction that he has set out to write an original Hebrew book that will serve as a substitute for foreign literature, since it is based on an early Israeli tradition, namely the Torah, which is the word of the living God, and the Talmud.

The title "The Fable of the Ancient" is indeed a hidden *shibutz*, as it leads to the continuation of the biblical verse: "Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness; but my hand shall not be upon thee," which parallels the previous verse, uttered by David: "The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee;

22 A *shibutz* is an artistic means referring to a word or part of a verse from the Bible that is embedded within the text and has meaning. Familiarity with the biblical context enriches the meanings and intentions of the literary text.

23 A hidden *shibutz* (biblical verse) is a *shibutz* that appears in part, e.g., includes only a few words from a biblical verse, but the meaning actually lies in the rest of the verse that does not appear in the literary text. A hidden *shibutz* is enigmatic, as the part of the verse that does not appear in the text is quite significant.

24 Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, generally known by the acronym Rashi, was an eleventh century biblical commentator. David Kimhi (1160–1235) was also known by the Hebrew acronym Radak. Rashi, Radak and R. Joseph Kara (1065–ca. 1135) were all biblical exegetes active in France.

25 Creating an affinity between the book and the Lord can be perceived as a means that serves the author's tendency to boast of the virtues of his book. However, this affinity can also be seen as providing an ideological-philosophical-religious starting point, which reflects the author's perception.

but my hand shall not be upon thee.”²⁶ In other words, the wicked will be punished by the hand of the wicked according to the law of God, rather than by the victim. In this title lies a hint of the idea interspersed within the entire book: In conflicts that arise between opposing parties (human or animal figures representing the position of the cynics and that of the author) – the “evil” will not be punished by the “good.” Although the righteous are harmed by the hand of evil, it is not their duty to avenge evil and retaliate. Evil will be punished by another person or by God.

In order to demonstrate this point, Ibn Sahula included in *Meshal HaQadmoni* various tales demonstrating that the wicked person might seem to prevail, but this is only a temporary state and he will receive his comeuppance in the end.

“The lion and his two companions, the deer and the fox”²⁷ – in which the evil fox attempts to cause the deer’s death but is punished by the lion. The story tells of a fox who tries to convince the hungry lion to devour the deer. The deer realizes that his life is in danger and chooses to turn to his Creator and pray. He also tells the lion about his background and lectures him on matters of morality and science, thus explaining the punishment for evil. The deer does not condemn or plan revenge on the fox, but the lion draws his conclusions from the deer’s words. Eventually, all the fox’s trickery is exposed, and he is punished by the lion, according to the rules of law and justice.

“The Proud Hawk, the Wild Rooster and the Desert Partridge”²⁸ – in this tale, the hawk devours the chicks of the storks and the turtledoves, ignoring the rebukes of the rooster and the partridge. Yet the rooster and the partridge do not attack him. Salvation comes from elsewhere, as the great eagle brings justice to light in a trial run according to accepted legal norms, and the hawk is finally sentenced to death. Like the previous tale, the evil and cruel hawk is punished by the eagle and not by the birds who were his victims.

“The Case of the Man of Labor” (the Fable of the Miser)²⁹ – here we learn that deceivers and pretenders are also similarly punished, but not by their victims. A rich but miserly man hosts a generous merchant in his house and ensures that he lacks for nothing. The guest is unaware of his host’s true nature, and at his request, gives him a small quantity of Gilead Balm – an expensive remedy that cures

²⁶ These words reinforce the notion that the judge in any dispute is God. In this statement the author qualifies his words, ensuring that the audience understands that he does not pretend to judge but only to advise, but at the same time he “recruits” God to be beside him. In addition, the man of God serves as a witness during the author’s debates with the five cynics throughout the book.

²⁷ See the author’s reply in the first gate of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Loewe edition (see note 8).

²⁸ *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Loewe edition (see note 8), the author’s reply in the second gate.

²⁹ *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Loewe edition (see note 8), the author’s reply in the third gate.

all ills. Toward the end of the visit, the miserly host asks the guest to pay a double sum for the hospitality he was shown. The guest, feeling cheated and humiliated, raises his eyes to the heavens and prays. His prayer is soon heard, as the miser is punished by another guest, a hunter who uses a poisonous drug for his work. Upon realizing he has ingested poison, the miser attempts to cure himself with the balm he received from his previous guest, but this does him no good and he dies. Justice has been served: the evil miser was not punished by the person he wronged, but by the heavens.

"The Cunning Merchant and the Hypocritical Old Man"³⁰ – in which an old man's evilness is revealed by someone other than his victim. A deceitful old man impersonates a religiously observant person and inspires the confidence of a merchant, who entrusts all his money to him. When the merchant comes to ask for his money, the old man denies receiving it, and the merchant leaves empty-handed, embarrassed and helpless. A large and cunning merchant comes to his aid and tricks the swindling old man into returning the merchant his money, exposing the true nature of the hypocrite. Once again, evil is exposed and punished by a third party.

In the bleak reality of thirteenth-century Spain, in which the Jews suffered harsh decrees, were involved in bitter debates with the church, underwent mass conversions, and more,³¹ the words of *Meshal HaQadmoni* "from the wicked came forth wickedness" reflect the author's somewhat covert attempt to encourage and comfort the Jewish people. The Jews, at the mercy of the Christian rulers and the Church, could not defend themselves and improve their situation, nor could they overthrow their tormentors. The words of *Meshal HaQadmoni* express a deep philosophical-religious conception that the author seeks to teach his readers through his book: The wicked prevail only temporarily, and sooner or later they will be punished, even if it is not clear when and by whom. Therefore, even if the persecuted Jews cannot, for the time being, fight back, the evil will be punished.

The final words of *Meshal HaQadmoni*, "but my hand shall not be upon thee" (I Samuel 24: 13) are significant. Once the author has clarified with his stories that the Jews should not lament that they cannot stop their Christian tormentors, since retribution, i.e. revenge, will be exacted by someone else, he plants in their hearts a promise that, in the end, they will be saved. Moreover, Ibn Sahula echoes the abovementioned biblical commentators: everything is in the hands of God, and evil will not go unpunished. The frustration felt at not being able to un-

³⁰ *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Loewe edition (see note 8), the author's reply in the fourth gate.

³¹ Discussed in depth in Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 283–300.

derstand the evil deeds of the wicked (*HaMikreh*, referring to coincidence or luck, and *HaGzerah*, referring to what is determined or decreed by God) or to fight them transforms into encouragement and comfort in the very knowledge or belief that evil will be punished, even if this is not always obvious to the ordinary person. The doctrine of retribution and its application, that is, the issue of “the righteous suffer, the wicked prosper” is bound with the question of the nature of divine justice.³² It seems, therefore, that this book’s main purpose, to alleviate the distress felt by the Jews, appears covertly already in the title given to the book by Ibn Sahula. This is a hidden message of encouragement and hope for better days: God has not forsaken his people; He is present and watching over the actions of all human beings and particularly his people. Belief in heavenly intervention in everyday reality, in the realm of the secular, serves as an anchor for the believer, providing encouragement and hope.

Duality – Boundaries and Their Breaking, Complete in Its Parts

Meshal HaQadmoni is comprised of five gates: wisdom, repentance, good advice, humility and reverence (fear of God). As part of the relationship between the sacred and the secular that is reflected in the book, Ibn Sahula uses several formative principles in the body of the book, which help didactically to create a clear dichotomy between good and evil, permitted and forbidden. These three principles are: the principle of division into two, the principle of debates and the principle of contrast. These three principles are artistic means utilized for the same purpose, functioning as tools to develop the controversy that is the basis for the book, and help the author convey his messages to his audience.

The five gates of the book have a common denominator: The principle of division into two is reflected in the internal structure of each title, which is divided into two: the words of the cynics versus the words of the author. The cynic begins, condemning the attribute under discussion at the center of each gate. The role of the author is to respond to the allegations made by the cynic and refute his remarks. Both adversaries are aided by storytelling systems and fables that are utilized to prove their claims.³³ The debate between the author and the cynics is

³² This is an age-old question. For more, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 313–30.

³³ The author has chosen his characters carefully – humans and animals who are perceived according to popular stereotypes in a positive or negative manner, e.g., a righteous person has a positive image and a thief, a negative one. The cynics behave and present a worldview representing a

based on the principle of contrast, since the two sides present opposing perspectives and worldviews. The internal structure of each gate is uniform. The cynic surrenders and is replaced by another cynic, leading to the opening of the next gate. The principles of division into two, the debate and the contrast, are didactic tools that serve the author's intention to teach his audience morality by clearly distinguishing between for and against, good and evil, while the visible layer is secular and for amusement and the hidden layer is sacred and moral.³⁴ The author reveals his manner of teaching in the introduction: the division into two orders creates a clear distinction, a clear boundary between the cynic's words and those of the author, as indicated by Ibn Sahula in the introduction:

Five chapters have I of the matter made,
 Bipartite each, as though a cynic sneers
 At virtue, then the confutation hears
 The author speak, whom moralist I call:
 One builds, and one demolishes his wall...
 I have therefore arranged each part to show
 Two characters, that old and young may know
 The defects of the one; the other's fate
 Wisdom and faith as virtues vindicate.
 (1: 14–15)

Didactically, the author explains that because the book is aimed at a diverse audience, he has chosen a teaching method that will suit a broad common denominator of people.

The principle of division into two refers to two parts that are one. This is expressed in various ways in *Meshal HaQadmoni*,³⁵ such as the relationship between the cynics' arguments and their poems and the author's replies, which together comprise a gate. It is also evident in the clear internal structure of each title and in its context within the frame-story, and expresses the author's idea in his introduction regarding the book's objectives. Each gate is constructed as a closed

hedonistic, rebellious and anti-moral lifestyle. The author depicts the animals in the book as either positive or negative characters, even if not clearly stereotypical. The contrast between the characters creates a tension that leads to a clash and the development of a debate which takes place against the background of the plot (the situation described in the story), and each side tries to convince the other of their arguments.

³⁴ This is not a symmetrical division. The cynic's part is constantly smaller as compared to the author's (Ibn Sahula), who reflects in his words, as stated, the main message of the book – wisdom and morality.

³⁵ Dan Pagis, *Change and Tradition in the Secular Poetry: Spain and Italy* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), 235–44 [Hebrew].

unit, a debate chapter within an entire essay comprised of five chapters: the cynic opens with provocative arguments that attack morality and invites the author to respond. The author's answer derives from the cynic's arguments, and his words, as stated, express the moral trend of the book. The results of the debate are known in advance to the reader: it is clear to him that he must object to the words of the cynic. The reader knows that the cynic's arguments depend on the author's answer, and these arguments will be dismissed by the moral reasoning of the author's words. Structurally, the first half of each gate therefore depends entirely on the second half.³⁶ Removing the cynic's stories from their general context will cause the book to be distorted and its main purpose to be missed and even reversed. The principle of division into two sometimes makes it difficult to follow the main argument, and yet despite the contrasts and contradictions between the two parts, it is evident that these are two parts of one whole. The starting point is to perceive each gate as one complete unit and also in a broader context, where each gate is part of a larger whole, i.e., the entire book, including its goals and trends.

The principle of division into two is reflected in the principle of debate, which is also one of the central formal and conceptual principles of the book. The whole book is constructed in the form of a debate. The first debate is opened by the man of God in the frame-story in the introduction to the first gate, which invites every educated person to come and debate the author. The debates continue to the body of the book, between the author and the cynics. These debates are conducted within a single arena, where the cynics alternate but the author remains. Each gate is another attempt to overcome the author in the controversial-ideological battle between them, but in the end the author is the one left standing, as the sole winner. After all the cynics have failed in their attempts to defeat the author, they surrender and adopt his position. Only then does the author return to the frame-story in which he converses again with the man of God, and thus the book ends. Their conversation presents a summary of the book's main messages: faith in God, repentance and the pursuit of wisdom. As a moral book, *Meshal HaQadmoni* clearly guarantees the author's victory already in the frame-story in the introduction.

In order to achieve his didactic-moral goals, the author is aided by the principle of debate and the principle of contrast, which are interrelated and are among the central principles at the base of the book. The principle of debate must be understood based upon the time and place in which the essay was written, thirteenth-century Spain. This century is known as a particularly polemic time for the Jewish people. The debates were mostly conducted either between the Jews and them-

36 Pagis, *Change and Tradition in the Secular Poetry* (see note 35), 239.

selves,³⁷ or between Jews and Christians.³⁸ Debates are shaped by creating a contrast between two sides.³⁹ This contrast provides a mirror image that highlights the properties of contrasts.

The book, as stated, is constructed as debates between a cynic who serves as a devil's advocate and the author, and revolves around the praise and condemnation of virtuous qualities.⁴⁰ The debate between the cynic, who represents the "evil inclinations," and the author, who embodies the image of the "good inclinations," echoes the Jewish/Christian debates in medieval Spain. The cynic's questions and the author's answers are based on the principles of the scholastic method, which is comprised of a question, an argument and proof. The different positions of the Jewish/Christian debate are expressed in the cynic's arguments and the author's answers.⁴¹

It seems, then, that the book's structure serves its ideas and ideals. The structural division is, in fact, a complete symmetrical connection that reflects the five values discussed in the book: wisdom, repentance, good advice, humility and reverence. There are structural and thematic connections between the gates, although each gate can also stand on its own. Conceptually, wisdom (acquiring knowledge of the Torah but also scientific teachings and general education) and repentance

37 The debate amongst the Jews revolved around several issues: the controversy over Maimonides's writings (see, for example, Haim Schirmann, *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christian Spain and Southern France*, supplemented by E. Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 329–279 [Hebrew]); a moral debate on the tension between materiality and spirituality, integrity and hypocrisy, humility and arrogance. Another aspect of the debate revolves around the society-class-economy aspect and took place between Jewish aristocrats who held positions as courtiers in the courts of Christian kings and the masses. The Jewish courtiers, who were easily influenced by the ways of the gentiles, were highly criticized by the Jewish community leaders. Haim Beinart, *Chapters in Judeo-Spanish History*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes 1998), 1: 36–50 [Hebrew].

38 The debate between Jews and Christians was of a religious nature. The Christian Church apparently discovered the Talmud in the thirteenth century, and the debate between the religions became poignant and even dangerous, because it gradually turned into a trial against Judaism. Jews were not allowed to respond to Christian claims, and their forced silence caused them public humiliation, which led to mass conversions. See, for example, Itzhak Baer, *A History of Jews in Christian Spain* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1965), 76, 90–96 [Hebrew].

39 This way is not new and is already found in the Bible, most prominently in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as well as in the writings of Sages, ancient *piyyutim* and medieval poetry. The *Zohar* also made use of opposites as a didactic means. See discussion on the subject: Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 150, n. 186, and also in the philosophical lecture of the ram on the doctrine of opposites in the second gate, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Zmora edition (see note 8), 75–77.

40 Wisdom versus folly, repentance versus mischief, good advice versus bad advice, humility versus pride, reverence versus the worship of stars.

41 Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), 144–51.

(honest and faithful behavior) are a way of life; Humility and reverence are character traits, which may be innate or acquired. The way to achieve the first two values is conditional on the acquisition of the last two values, and this takes place through guidance and insights that are “good advice,” the value at the center of the third gate. The third gate, therefore, stands among the other gates as an axis upon which they hang, thus dividing the book into two parts.

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

The book opens with the first gate – wisdom, and closes with the fifth – reverence and the fear of God. The two cynics – the protagonists of the first and the fifth gate – condemn the wisdom that is achieved by the study of the principles of the Torah. The cynic in the first gate clings to a deterministic verse from Ecclesiastics: “one event happeneth to them all,”⁴² that is, the destiny of both the wise and foolish is predetermined, no matter what path they choose to take. The fifth cynic also states that everything that happens to a person during his lifetime is predetermined.⁴³ The fifth cynic and the author demonstrate each in turn a great deal of knowledge of external wisdoms, i.e., scientific theories,⁴⁴ which they use to strengthen their arguments. It is clear that the cynic and the author present two conflicting positions: the cynic holds a secular deterministic point of view, while the author presents a Jewish religious perspective.

The five chapters of the book include general matters of wisdom and morality aimed at educating man on the path of morality and reverence for God. That is: the secular and the universal are subordinate to the sacred, and serve it.⁴⁵ The division

⁴² Ecclesiastes 2: 14.

⁴³ Meshal Haqadmoni, Zmora edition (see note 8), 237.

⁴⁴ The cynic includes in his stories scientific theories that Judaism does not accept (for example: a deterministic conception that states that what takes place in the world is determined only by the stars) and his foolishness is intensified. On the other hand, the author includes in his stories external wisdoms: astronomy, astrology, geography, etc., which do not contradict the Jewish faith (and thus his wisdom is bolstered). Only in the fifth gate (in the author's answer) does he include drawings on scientific topics.

⁴⁵ Wisdom and morality literature is essentially religious and didactic and common to all three religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each of the religions emphasizes in its literature the spirit of its principles, but they all also have a broad common denominator that is associated with universal-moral issues of good and evil, allowed and forbidden, which pertain to every human being. These include God's love and reverence, charity, humility, curbing lust, social equality, justice and righteousness. In addition to the influence of the *Adab* literature on the educated and the Hebrew poets, the influence of Christian moral literature must also be taken into account.

of the book into gates is similar to the structures and divisions in the Arabic *adab* literature, which is secular literature in which *adab* sayings were incorporated according to subjects and gates, such as the gate of faith, the gate of suffering, the gate of friends, the gate of silence, etc.⁴⁶ As for the contents, some essays discuss attributes and their opposites, and each attribute had two gates devoted to it: one for its good qualities and the other for its bad ones, both presenting their arguments in a very detailed manner.⁴⁷ Although the values are universal and the patterns are similar to those found in Arabic literature, Ibn Sahula usually paints them with a Jewish hue using proverbs, *shibutzim* and quotations from the Bible, the Sages and Talmudic literature as well as Jewish moralistic literature. Many of his ideas are based on the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which are often formulated as contrasts. He formulates the importance of justice and its implementation, such as the importance and reliability of witnesses and the administration of fair justice, according to the Bible and the Talmud. Repentance is also an idea common to the three religions and is expressed in their literature, though Ibn Sahula bases his writing mainly on Talmudic sources and the moralistic and Kabbalistic literature that was popular during his time.⁴⁸ Repentance is a central element in the book, and Ibn Sahula guides his audience in its spirit. True wisdom, according to Ibn Sahula, is reverence. Once again, Ibn Sahula reiterates the matter of the choice given to man, between good and evil.

The book opens with the gate of wisdom and ends with the gate of reverence for God, closing with the following words:

... one of all men wisest, though he had begun
Studying teleology, averred

Issues such as repairing one's morals, subduing pride, restraining inclinations and lust, choosing a path of humility and poverty and choosing "Christ's Grace" as a way of life – were dominant issues mainly due to the missionary activities of the church. See, for example, Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture* (see note 6), 187–202. The Euro-Christian medieval world was seen as a scene of a struggle between virtue and evil: wisdom versus foolishness or humility versus pride or stinginess and greed versus generosity and kindness. See Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture* (see note 6), 196. See also David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity: Studies and Essays* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Ha-Poalim, 1979), 210–25 [Hebrew]. On the degree of humility, see *ibid*.

⁴⁶ Yehuda Ratzaby, "Adab Proverbs in Medieval Literature," *The Treasure of the Jews of Spain* 4 (1961), 114–22 [Hebrew].

⁴⁷ Ratzaby, "Adab Proverbs in Medieval Literature" (see note 46), 114. Ratzaby adds that this literature was translated into Hebrew during the Spanish period. See also Ignaz (Itzhak) Goldziher, *A Short History of Arabic Literature*, trans. from Croatian to Hebrew by Pessah Shinar (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 78 [Hebrew]; Pagis, *Change and Tradition* (see note 35), 173–74.

⁴⁸ Such as Maimonides's *Book of Science, Shaarei Teshuvah* (Gates of Repentance) by R. Yonah of Gironi, and "The Hidden Midrash."

We must conclude, when all is said and heard,
 That man's vocation is the lord to fear
 And keep his precepts. Holy writ makes clear
 That rectitude one ought as truth define:
 Lo, fear of god is wisdom; to decline
 Evil's temptation, understanding's sign.
 (2: 718–19)

The book's conclusion: "fear of the God is wisdom; to decline evil's temptation, understanding's sign"⁴⁹ is a *shibutz* from Job 28: 28.⁵⁰ This chapter summarizes the central message of the Book of Job and also of *Meshal HaQadmoni*: The wisdom of man will be expressed by the path he chooses,⁵¹ i.e. to depart from evil and fear the Lord.⁵² The thematic parallelism in the verse reinforces and emphasizes the affinity between the fifth and first gates. The ending leads to the conclusion that reverence is wisdom and vice versa. Indeed, this is the conclusion to which the author seeks to lead his audience.

The author ends the book with a conclusion that should be perceived as the motto of the book: reverence, repentance and distancing from evil all equal wisdom and all four virtues lead to and are dependent on the virtue of humility. The virtues and values that the author seeks to teach his audience are reflected in each other and blended into each other, making them inseparable.

Among the scholars who discussed the unity and importance of the integrity of works of art, is William W. Ryding.⁵³ Ryding determined that a worthy work of art will contain a kind of unity, which is a condition for its integrity. This refers mostly to narrative unity and a sense of completeness in the deeds and actions of the protagonists, which create a logical correlation and interaction between all parts of the work.⁵⁴ Indeed, the attempt to find a direct connection between the cynic's

49 *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Zmora edition (see note 8), 305.

50 The chapter in Job is divided into two parts: the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God. Man's conclusion is that his strength and wisdom are limited, he does not know where or how he might find wisdom, and therefore he must place his trust in God.

51 On the subject of wisdom, see Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8), ch. 7, especially the summary.

52 This is also reflected in the tales, for example, the "The Riddle of the Fawn and the Wild Goat," in which the fawn and the wild goat are described as wise and God-fearing people. Wisdom is reflected in awe and is inseparable from it. And see below in Refael-Vivante, *Matmon Meshalim* (see note 8) ch. 3, in the section dealing with the scientific discussions.

53 And see William W. Ryding, *Structure in Medieval Narrative* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971), 115–61.

54 Ryding, *Structure in Medieval Narrative* (see note 53), 115. See also Pagis, *Change and Tradition* (see note 35), 239.

questions and those of the author leads to the conclusion that we must consider the overall picture. A summary of all the author's answers in all the gates comprises one answer to all the questions and arguments presented by the cynics. Seeing all the cynics' arguments as one unit and all the author's answers as another unit,⁵⁵ the moral truth of the author is one.

In conclusion, *Meshal HaQadmoni* is a book of morals, debates and good advice clad in an entertaining artistic cover (such as illustrations, animal fables and amusing *shibutzim*). The structure and other artistic means used by the author are subject to and serve the content, the author's intentions. The debate thus serves as a tactic meant to lead readers on the path of intelligent reasoning to the moral-religious conclusions that the author seeks to instill in them. The manipulations and rhetorical tactics used by Ibn Sahula are intended to persuade the audience to choose correctly and well. Ibn Sahula is aware that his book belongs to the secular genre but throughout the book he instructs the reader to read his work as a book that discusses the sacred. He asks the reader to look inward rather than outward, to focus on what is important rather than what is not (amusing fables and colorful illustrations). Indeed, throughout the book the reader feels the struggle between the sacred and the secular and between good and evil in both text and the sub-text. The man of God who is present as a bystander in the debates between the author and the cynics, eventually witnesses the reaching of the final conclusion: the true wisdom is the fear of God.

55 Here too the three principles – the principle of division into two, the principle of debates and the principle of contrast – are expressed.

Dafna Nissim

The Secular and the Sacred in a Bifolio from *Louis of Laval's Book of Hours* and Its Spiritual Use

Abstract: A bifolio from a Book of Hours made for Louis of Laval is the point of departure for this article. I explore the blurred boundaries between the sacred and the secular in the portrait of the patron and his attendants and the depiction of the Virgin, the Infant, and a choir of angels. I contend that as in other portraits of noble devotees praying to the Virgin and Child, in *Laval's Book of Hours*, the two parts of the bifolio were designed to give the owner a sense of familiarity with the sacred figures. Through a series of choices, the artist suggested the shared character of the secular and profane figures, that is, their humanness, and other points of similarity. The cognitive-emotional experience of kinship might well have encouraged the devotee to aspire toward spiritual union with the Divine.

Keywords: cognitive reception; contemplation; devotion; enclosed garden; The Virgin; portrait; prolonged gaze; cognitive-emotional experience; illuminated manuscripts

Books of Hours are hybrid volumes that blend secular and religious elements, in that they include devotional texts, sacred images alongside personal mottos, coats of arms, and portraits of owners. Since the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, artists designed such manuscripts to appeal to their noble patrons, interpolating elements from mundane life in the pictorial program that challenged its reading. Portraits of the owners in prayer books reflect the intermingling of the secular and the sacred realms. The tendency of fifteenth-century artists to depict the book's owner and the holy figures with sensitivity to natural human appearance and in different architectural spaces helped the devotees to reflect on their resemblance to and difference from the painted saints.¹ In the present article, I

Note: Earlier versions of this article were presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds 2020, at the Center for the Study of Conversions and Inter Religious Encounters, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev 2021, and at Research Students Seminar, Bar-Ilan 2022.

1 On the depiction of different spaces in devotional portraiture, see Ingrid Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting*. Brill Studies in Intellectual History, 299 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019).

suggest that the blurred boundaries between the sacred and the secular in such portraits have served as devices that assisted the devotee in the first stage of his contemplative ascent from the physical realm to the spiritual. Through a series of artistic choices, the artist suggested the shared character of the secular and holy figures, that is, their humanness and other points of similarity. The cognitive-emotional experience of kinship might well have encouraged the devotee to aspire toward spiritual union with the Divine, a well-known practice among the pious laity, and the illustration might well have fostered the beginning of spiritual ascension.

Medieval studies describe the interest of lay people in spiritual practices in detail. In the wake of the Lateran IV decrees, which, among other concerns, were intended to strengthen faith among the laity, devotees sought pastoral care and became committed to enhancing their religious persona to ensure redemption.² One form of spirituality, which evolved in Cistercian monasteries and at Saint Victor's Abbey in Paris, turned to the hermeneutics of the *Song of Songs* as a symbol of a possible unity of the soul with the Divine.³ It involved powerful forms of spiritual passion in divine-human relationships and contributed to the development of inner religious experience.⁴ The concept of private and inner dialogue with God fascinated many, but the "spiritual ambitions" of the nobility, to adopt Nicole

2 F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 287–95. For an overview of lay spirituality in the late Middle Ages, see Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, 4 vols., *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)*, vol. 3 (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998). For studies about noble interest in spirituality with the aid of illustrated books, see Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

3 For Bernard of Clairvaux's exegesis for the *Song of Songs*, see Saint Bernard (of Clairvaux), *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux III: On the Song of Songs II*, trans. Kilian Walsh (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976). For more on interpretations of the *Song of Songs*, see Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). On the influence of his work, see Catherine Rose Cavadini, "The Cistercian Song: Reception of Bernard of Clairvaux's Exegesis in Later Cistercian Interpretations of the *Song of Songs*," *A Companion to the Song of Songs in the History of Spirituality*, ed. Timothy Robinson (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 101–22.

4 Timothy Robinson, "Introduction," *A Companion to the Song of Songs in the History of Spirituality*, ed. Timothy Robinson (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 1–17. For a recent study exploring how the "imagery of the *Song of Songs* reinforced the notion that wounding love would lead to Christ's kiss and embrace," see Lieke Smits, "Wounding, Sealing, and Kissing: Bridal Imagery and the Image of Christ," *Medium Aevum* 88.1 (2019): 1–22.

Rice's apt term, were even higher.⁵ Nobles had much more access to spiritual knowledge as they hired Franciscans and Dominican confessors and had the financial sources to acquire manuscripts dealing with the contemplative life.⁶ Portraits of owners in French Books of Hours reflect spiritual piety by associating supplicants with the Virgin, the Christ Child, and various saints.⁷

Here, I take as a case study a bifolio from Louis of Laval's Book of Hours (hereafter, *Laval's Hours*, 1470–1475 and 1480–1485, BnF, lat. 920, fols. 50v–51r), one of the most ambitious illustrated manuscripts produced in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.⁸ The patron and owner was a descendant of one of the most powerful noble houses of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century France. He consolidated his power with several administrative roles, becoming Grand Maitre des Eaux et Forêts du Roi and served as a counselor to King Louis XI.⁹ The manuscript was created by several artists, among them Jean Colombe, the Master of the Missal of Yale, and probably an artist from the circle of Jean Fouquet.¹⁰ It has 157 full-page illustrations and 1055 miniatures.

5 Nicole R. Rice, "Spiritual Ambition and the Translation of the Cloister: The Abbey and Charter of the Holy Ghost," *Viator* 33 (2002): 222–60; here 224.

6 From the end of the fourteenth century until the end of the fifteenth, the kings and queens of France chose confessors who studied at the University of Paris or the College of Navarre in Paris, where they had been exposed and could discuss mendicant teaching: Xavier de La Selle, *Le service des âmes à la cour: confesseurs et aumôniers des rois de France, du XIIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris: École nationale des chartes, 1995), 108–15.

7 See Craig Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 15.2 (1985): 87–118. Although he focuses on panel paintings, he also discusses portraits of owners in Books of Hours. On the origins of devotional diptychs in illustrated owners' portraits in Books of Hours, see Laura Deborah Gelfand, "Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Devotional Portrait Diptychs: Origins and Function," Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, 1994.

8 For more on the program of the book and its illustrations, see Abbé Victor Leroquais, *Les livres d'heures manuscrits de la bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: Maçon, 1927), 1: 15–30. It was produced in 1470–1475 and embellished with several more cycles in 1480–1485.

9 Malcolm Walsby, *The Counts of Laval: Culture, Patronage and Religion in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 26–27.

10 Since scholars agree that Colombe executed most of the work, I refer to him as the artist responsible for the bifolio: François Avril and Nicole Reynaud, *Les Manuscrits à Peintures En France: 1440–1520* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993); François Avril, Maxence Hermant, and Françoise Bibolet, *Très Riches Heures de Champagne: L'enluminure en Champagne à la fin du moyen âge: [catalogue de l'exposition itinérante produite par l'agence de coopération interbibliothécaire présentée en 2007–2008 dans les bibliothèques municipales à vocation régionale de Châlons-En-Champagne, Troyes et Reims]* (Paris: Hazan, 2007); Samuel Gras, "The Master of Jeanne de France: A Bridge between Jean Fouquet and the Jouvenel Group," *Re-Inventing Traditions: On the Transmission of Artistic Patterns in Late Me-*



Fig. 1: Jean Colombe, Laval in prayer in front of the Virgin and Child, The Book of Hours of Louis de Laval, 1470–1475 and 1480–1485, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 920, fols. 50v and 51r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

The bifolio figures Laval and his courtly company praying to the Virgin and Child attended by a choir of angels (fig. 1). As I discuss further on, the artist fabricated a composition, offering points of similarities between the sacred scene on the left-hand folio and the more secular space of the right-hand folio. Several contemporary studies have focused on the visionary dimensions of the owner portraits by studying the growing concern with visibility and self-scrutiny,¹¹ or by exploring contemporary devotional and spiritual textual metaphors that have visual counterparts in the portraits.¹² Building on their findings, I take another path and look at the cognitive reception of the artwork. According to Cynthia Hahn, Renana Bartal, and others, in the medieval period sacred works of art were designed particularly

dieval Manuscript Illumination, ed. Joris Heyder and Christine Seidel. Civilizations & History, 34 (New York: Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2015), 145–69.

¹¹ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (see note 2).

¹² Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (see note 1).

to encourage the viewer to engage in such cognitive practices as comparison, recollection, and association.¹³ The ability to collate one image with another is a cognitive act, one that was expected of medieval erudite audiences during engagements with portrayals in manuscripts, as well as in other media. My intention is to decipher the way the sense of sight was addressed by the artists and how the bifolio encouraged the contemporary viewer to employ a dialectic mode of interpretation. This line of investigation will help us to understand how the interpolation of the secular and the sacred promoted a sense of familiarity with the holy figures, a first step toward spiritual ascent. In the last section of the article, I explore the iconography of the view from the open door on the upper left side of the right-hand folio and discuss the possible spiritual use of the work.

The Bifolio and the Practice of the Prolonged Gaze

Psychological studies on cognitive reception and aesthetic evaluation of artworks reinforced by recent studies in cognitive neuroscience highlight the immediate pre-cognitive response to visual art. The first impression, often measured in milliseconds, predicts the presence or absence of cognitive-emotional-intellectual interest. If the visual content elicits a mental curiosity, the viewer will explore the work more deeply thereby accumulating knowledge about the theme and the way it is represented and will engage in an interpretive process.¹⁴ Paul Locher and others have explored the experience of visitors in museum settings and when they view images projected on the retina. Unlike the experience of quick observation in these researches, it is most likely that Laval had a different kind of encounter

13 Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 39–45; Alyce A. Jordan, “Seeing Stories in the Windows of the Sainte-Chapelle: The Ars poetriae and the Poetics of Visual Narrative,” *Mediaevalia* 23 (2002): 39–60; Renana Bartal, “Repetition, Opposition, and Invention in an Illuminated Meditationes vitae Christi: Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 410,” *Gesta* 53 (2014): 155–74.

14 Paul J. Locher, “The Aesthetic Experience with Visual Art ‘at First Glance,’” *Investigations into the Phenomenology and the Ontology of the Work of Art*, ed. Peer F. Bundgaard and Frederik Stjernfelt (Open access: Springer, Cham, 2015), 75–88; San Verhavent, Johan Wagemans, and M. Dorothee Augustin, “Beauty in the Blink of an Eye: The Time Course of Aesthetic Experiences,” *British Journal of Psychology* 109.1 (2018): 63–84; Mel W. Khaw, Phoebe Nichols, and David Freedberg, “Speed of Person Perception Affects Immediate and Ongoing Aesthetic Evaluation,” *Acta Psychologica* 197 (2019): 166–76. I would like to thank Shahaf Leshem for sharing her invaluable information on this topic.

while viewing the bifolio. Illustrated prayer books fostered a long-lasting relationship with their owners. Usually small in size, their expected daily use and the diverse relationship between texts and visual imagery promoted the employment of the senses in an intimate environment. The artwork reflects a central motivation on the part of the network of patronage, which usually included artists/designers, agents, and sometimes religious advisors, to influence the inner world of the owner. To achieve this purpose, the manuscript and its visual imagery had to appeal to the sense of sight to actuate the prolonged gaze as a first step toward the construction of knowledge.

Senses are never merely passive receptors; rather their employment is subordinated to cultural training. Seeing was always a significant act in Christian religious practice and was associated with the acquisition of earthly and heavenly knowledge.¹⁵ Cynthia Hahn describes how late medieval theological beliefs in the possibility of acquiring access to the Divine engendered the contemplative gaze.¹⁶ Several devotional practices developed in the late Middle Ages support her observation regarding the emphasis placed on a lingering mode of seeing. An illustration showing John, duke of Berry (1340–1416), lifting his head and focusing his gaze on the elevated Host demonstrates the importance of the prolonged mode of seeing in the ritual of elevating the Host (fig. 2; *Petites Heures*, Paris, BnF, latin 18014, fol. 172r).¹⁷ Located in the section on different *Oraisons et suffrages*, that depiction is similar to many other illustrations in prayer books designed for the laity. In most cases, the priest is portrayed lifting the Host while standing in front of the altar, with other clerics and noble devotees behind him. Although the priest turns his back to the worshippers, in such illustrations all the gazes are directed toward the raised Host. In the *Petites Heures* we even find what seems to be a diagonal line stretching from the folded hands of the portrayed patron to the Host in the hands of the priest.

15 Augustine, for example, considered that physical sight was a model for the mechanism of the spiritual vision, the one that fulfills the desire for an understanding of religious truth, God, and the soul. For an extensive survey of ideas relating to the different modes of vision, see Michael Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 16–25.

16 Cynthia Hahn, “Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality,” *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169–96. See also Sixten Ringbom, “Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety,” *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* 73.6 (1969): 159–66.

17 From the thirteenth century on, a high point in the ceremony became the moment after the consecration of the bread and wine when, in a gesture of elevation, the priest offered the worshippers the opportunity to see the Host. Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54–55.



Fig. 2: French, Jean of Berry kneels in front of the elevated Host, *The Petites Heures*, 1375 and 1385–90, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 18014, fol. 172r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

The noble courts of France, in particular, were places where individuals practiced the prolonged gaze. Johan Huizinga described how the applied arts were a ubiquitous source of visual images associated with diverse aspects of medieval life. The affluence evident in artworks commissioned and displayed at the court – the forms, materials, and colors of commissioned artworks, liveries, tapestries, and other decorations for secular and sacred rituals – created a spectacle that demanded the audience's attention and interpretation.¹⁸ Noble participants had to apply their trained visual abilities to explore the various images displayed on ducal residences as well as at multisensory events such as feasts. Christina Normore emphasizes the innovative nature of some of the elements of such feasts: wine spread from the end of an arrow attached to a sculpted figure and an image of the Burgundian coat of arms presented with the serving of the roasted chicken, to mention a few among many, which led the participants to explore the unexpected and

¹⁸ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (1924; London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 223–24.

unique images. They compared the uncanny combinations brought about with what they themselves knew from their visual environment and discussed it with their companions, interpreting their contents.¹⁹

Court artists wished to fulfill the expectations of their patrons on various levels. As Stephen Perkinson noted, image-makers “needed to suggest that they could create perfect likenesses ... directly from memory, and that they could manipulate those mental images in new and imaginative ways.”²⁰ Those who were chosen not only had to employ their artistic abilities to depict objects and figures in a naturalistic way, but also had to address the acculturated structures of sensual and cognitive perception of the elite in order to assist them in the process of reception, comprehension, and interpretation of the work in accord with the horizon of expectations of the French aristocracy.²¹

Thus, for example, the network of patronage responsible for the creation of a manuscript would have considered patrons’ familiarity with the image-text relationship as a source of knowledge. Many *mis-en-page* of Psalters and Books of Hours in England from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, for example, feature illustrations of Christian core themes alongside carnivalesque depictions on the edges of the folios.²² The division of the folio in various inventive ways invited viewers to move from the text to the edge illustrations and from embellished initial letters to framed illustrations and vice versa. It encouraged them to linger on the page and to interpret the sometimes-contradictory messages in challenging ways.²³

Laval’s bifolio addresses the viewer’s sense of sight in various ways. The artist depicted a plenitude of objects, sculpted frames replete with different kinds of im-

19 Christina Normore, *A Feast for the Eyes: Art, Performance, and the Late Medieval Banquet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 135, 147.

20 Stephen Perkinson, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 190.

21 On the “horizon of expectations,” see Jauss Hans Robert, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti. *Theory and History of Literature*, 2 (1978; Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 22–28.

22 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992).

23 There are of course other examples of creative composition of illustrations and text. See, for example, the layout of an illustrated copy of the *City of God* (1405–1406, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, 1945–65–1), made for Jean, duke of Berry. As the illustrations are not attached in the rubricated chapter headings, the layout forces the viewer to move his gaze from a text to an illustration, which are often not in a sequence. Heather Elizabeth Tennison, “Tradition, Innovation, and Agency in a *City of God*: The Philadelphia *Cité de Dieu* and Early Fifteenth-Century Parisian Manuscript Culture,” Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, Lawrence, 2021, 140–41.

ages and inscriptions, an interior with an exit to a garden, alongside the figures of the owner, courtiers, angels, and Mary with the Child. The repetition of certain colors creates a lively pattern: for example, the red velvet of Laval's mantle is repeated in the backdrop, where we get a glimpse of the sleeve of one of his distinguished courtiers. Material in the same color covers the stool on which Mary sits. The organization of the two sides of the layout in a mirror-like composition and the construction of the perspective of each side with several layers direct the eye to move horizontally as well as into the depth of the rendering.

It seems that artists working with noble patrons in this period sought for ways to challenge the visual perception of their audiences. Modern studies of the anatomy of the eye and the way it transmits an image to the brain reveal that only the center of the retina can receive a clear and focused image. Owing to this limitation, one's eyes move in quick movements (saccades) among several fixed points.²⁴ When looking at an illustration or a painting, the picture conveyed to the brain is an accretion of separate images over many fractions of a second.²⁵ Jean Colome and his associates were not familiar with these findings, but they responded to the human experience of creating an image in the viewer's mind. Their artistic program including polychromatic combinations of different textures and forms invited the owner to focus on the image while his sight moved in saccades, lingering on different parts of the composition. The sensual act resulted in a preliminary mental image, which he then evaluated, compared, and stored in his memory.

Comparing the Sacred and the Secular

After understanding how the imagery addresses the patron's sense of sight drawing him to linger on the bifolio, I now examine how the blurred boundaries between the sacred and the secular were artistically communicated to the devotee. The layouts of many manuscripts' visual programs were meant to elicit mental processes that facilitate the creation of new knowledge based on new and old mental images stored in memory. Several studies concerning medieval art point to artistic adaptations of some rhetorical techniques. A well-circulated treatise, entitled the *Poetria nova*, written by Geoffrey of Vinsauf at the beginning of the thirteenth

²⁴ Gerald Westheimer, "Mechanism of Saccadic Eye Movements," *AMA Archives of Ophthalmology* 52.5 (1954): 710–24. I would like to thank Gal Sofer for explaining issues regarding the physiology of the eyes.

²⁵ David Melcher and Patrick Cavanagh, "Pictorial Cues in Art and in Visual Perception," *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 359–94.

century, which gives specific advice to future writers about the composition of poetry, incorporates several such devices, among them repetition and variation, in order to draw an audience's attention.²⁶ Mary Carruthers claims that the main goal of medieval linguistic ornaments such as vivid word-painting and allegory was to "catch hold of our constantly moving minds and set them in a particular motion, or give them a particular task."²⁷ In the light of the importance of rhetorical devices for the construction of thought and for meaning-making processes, artists creating works of art for erudite audiences adapted the linguistic rhetoric in their work. From this perspective, Bartal interprets repetitions and oppositions in the artistic program of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* (Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 410), which was probably made for a female patron from the order of the Poor Clares or from another branch of the Franciscans. She contends: "Its pictorial rhetoric ... invite her to collate, compare, and associate – in other words, to actively interpret the text with each new reading."²⁸

In fifteenth-century manuscripts, a diptych-like composition of devotees and saints, which suggests that the viewer should compare the two sides of the composition, was one of many ways to depict the desired relationship with the Divine. Colome might have been influenced by the Master of the Missal of Yale with whom he collaborated in *Laval's Hours*. In ms. Latin 1179, the Master of the Missal of Yale figured the owner of the manuscript and his family on the right-hand leaf and the scene of the *Descent from the Cross* on the left-hand one.²⁹ The composition of the two leaves projects a group of figures on either side, while the illuminator created a sense of visual continuity by placing the family members on a diagonal line that continues the contour of the mountain on the backdrop of the heartbreaking scene (fig. 3).

The comparative program in *Laval's Hours* is much more sophisticated. A combination of naturalistic rendering and an adoption of visual terminology associated with court culture in the divine figures contributes to the nuanced map of comparison. The artist painted the patron and the sacred figures with a sensitivity to human proportions and with a sense of volume and presence. The obvious atten-

26 Geoffroi de Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, trans. Margaret F. Nims (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), 23–40. Cynthia Hahn, for example, shows how the same poetic strategies found their way into form and matter in illustrated narrative sequences: Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart* (see note 13), 39–45.

27 Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 118.

28 Bartal, "Repetition, Opposition, and Invention" (see note 13), 174.

29 For the scanned manuscript, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8446945q> (last accessed on May 5, 2023).



Fig. 3: Master of the Missal of Yale, *The Owner and His Family in front of the Descent from the Cross*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Latin 1179, fols. 1v–2r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

tion to the figures' naturalistic features is not only a reflection of the artist's skill. One reason for the development of mimetic and naturalistic style in paintings by European artists was related to a key concept in Christian theology that holds that Christ is one individual who possesses both a divine and a human nature and that his mother was a human being with superior qualities.³⁰ Although an interest in depicting the humanity of Christ (as an infant and an adult) is known prior to the Gothic period,³¹ this artistic trend intensified in the late Middle Ages with the burgeoning of lay piety. The importance of the senses, among them the sense of sight, and the belief that taking the first step to ascend to a higher spiritual plane required observations of the natural world and the need to trace the

³⁰ Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms: Revised and Expanded* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 161.

³¹ Richard Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Catacombs to the Eve of the Renaissance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 105.

divine exemplars within it,³² mandated the mimetic qualities of artworks in the late Middle Ages.

The bifolio invites the viewer to estimate the similarities or dissimilarities between Mary with her child and the portrait of the owner. The position of Laval and the holy figures in the foreground of the composition, their almost similar size, and their comparable prominence in space facilitate comparison. The artist used red and blue for the dresses of Mary and Laval and the furniture coverings, a feature that assisted the moving of the gaze from left to right and vice versa. Mary is portrayed as a young woman holding her infant in a tender way. She is gazing downward at Christ's curly hair. Although her image reflects ideal qualities and is less individual, her relationship with her son reflects an emphasis on the humanity of the mother and the son.³³ Colombe drew on an artistic technique popular from approximately the middle of the thirteenth century to depict the Virgin with grace and elegance.³⁴ He treated her cloak and her gentle gesture with attention to volume and movement and painted the figure of Christ with childish features, which rendered the divine figures more accessible to a Christian viewer. In shaping the figure of the Virgin showing her maternal tenderness and the naked Jesus and his exposed genitals, the artist created a parallel between Louis of Laval and the figures on the left side of the composition. They were also human beings who lived in the world as he did. Louis could compare their young-looking skin with his aging appearance and identify with their humanity, which was, in effect, a shared quality.

The entourages on both sides of the bifolio offer another point of comparison. Examination of the two groups reveals several kinds of similarities that contribute to the blurred boundaries between the religious and the mundane. There is a likeness in the appearances of the two cohorts. The distinguished courtiers resemble their counterparts on the opposite leaf as they stand silently, their gazes fixed downward. Colombe shaped the figures of the angels, portraying them surrounding Mary and the Child in anthropomorphic forms without wings. The celestial creatures might have been figured in accord with the discourse of medieval theologians on their nature and role in this world and the next. In *Five Books on Con-*

³² See, for example, Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., ed. with introduction and notes Stephen F. Brown, new edition with new materials (1956; Cambridge: Hackett, 1993), Chapters 1–2.

³³ The image of Mary as a tender mother disseminated in the West during the Gothic period was more emotionally accessible for the supplicants than her image as unreachable empress identified with Byzantine art: Achilles Stubbe, *La Madone dans l'art* (Brussels: Elsevier, 1958).

³⁴ Nathanael Michael Hauser, "The Standing Madonna Statue in the Ile-de-France, 1270–1350: Style and Iconography," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and St. Paul, 2003, 15–32.

sideration (1145) Bernard of Clairvaux related to the celestial hierarchy and suggested that the names of the various heavenly creatures were revealed so that humans would be able to understand the nature of each order.³⁵ He elaborated on their nature in respect to their proximity to humankind or to God. In this view, angels are celestial creatures “sent to serve those who are to obtain salvation,” but the highest rank is made up of seraphs, who sit close to God’s throne, “burning with love, shining with knowledge.”³⁶ In the art of this period, angels who serve humankind were generally depicted as young humans without sexual identity, whose wings allow them to appear before humans as well as to transcend to heaven. In *Laval's Hours*, Colombe went further with the resemblance of these angels to humans and did not give them wings.

In many illustrations in the art of the period, angels of the low rank who attend Mary resemble courtiers in the roles of court attendants. In the opening illustration of the *Golden Legend of Jean de Vignay* (Paris, BnF, Master of the Coronation of the Virgin, ca. 1403),³⁷ there are allusions to a court’s mundane norms (fig. 4). In the illustration, Mary humbly approaches the throne of Christ attended by holy women and by an angel who is holding the hem of the Virgin’s cloak as court ladies were wont to do for their queen.³⁸ In Laval’s bifolio, we note that various features of the angelic choir are similar to those of the courtiers. The two groups attending the principal figures are gathered in triangular arrangements – Laval’s courtiers form one triangle and the angels accompanying the Virgin and Child are figured in two triangles with one of their points apparently converging at the Virgin’s torso. The blurred boundaries between the sacred figures and their secular counterparts thus fostered the idea that Laval as a ruler had something in common with the Queen of Heaven.

The mental act of contemplating the resemblances and differences among divine figures, the owner of the portrait, and his secular company laid the groundwork for feelings of affinity and identification. By adopting visual terminology from the mundane life in court in the sacred section of the composition and by shaping the holy figures with human qualities, the artist directed Louis of Laval

35 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 147.

36 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration* (see note 35), 147, 149.

37 For the scanned manuscript, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426005j/f9.item> (last accessed on May 5, 2023).

38 The iconography of Mary with angelic attendants appears in various representations of the Virgin in Christian art of the period. See, for example, angelic entourage in the depiction of The Mother of Mercy, Hélène Millet, Claudia Rabel, and Bruno Mottin, *La Vierge au manteau du Puy-en-Velay: un chef-d'oeuvre méconnu du gothique international (vers 1400–1410)* (Lyon: Fage Editions, 2011).



Fig. 4: Master of the Coronation of the Virgin, *The Golden Legend of Jean de Vignay*, ca. 1403, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Français 242, fol. Ar (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

to acknowledge several points of similarities that he shared with Mary and Jesus. He could recognize the humanity he shared with the Virgin and the Child and might well have been content with the fact of having an entourage like the one pictured in the holy space of the bifolio. Joachim Duynand argues that an important element that initiates the interaction between a devotee and a saint is a sense of familiarity and kinship that the devotee shares with his/her subject of adoration. Coupled with veneration of the holiness of the saint, it motivates the celebrant to imitate the saint and improve his/herself.³⁹ The emphasis in the late Middle Ages and especially in the fifteenth century on lay devotion as a way to enhance religiosity and to assist in the final goal of salvation led to the creation of various practices

³⁹ Joachim Duynand, "Hermeneutics of Imitation: A Philosophical Approach to Sainthood and Exemplariness," *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Joshua Schwartz and Marcel Poorthuis. Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 7–21.

of identification as the one demonstrated here, which served as a starting point for moral improvement and was the first step on a spiritual journey.⁴⁰

The Iconography of the Spiritual Journey and the Role of the Devotee

Elsewhere I associated the bifolio in *Laval's Hours* with a mystical union between the devotee and God. Measuring the horizontal distance from the curved left border of fol. 51r to Laval's mouth and from the right border of fol. 50v to the infant's head reveals that when the owner turned the pages, he could manipulate the image in a way that he could see himself kissing the head of the Infant.⁴¹ As I noted above, the exegesis of the *Song of Songs* by late medieval theologians who linked the kiss of the maiden and her beloved to the mystical union was one of the sources of inspiration for the creation of this work. In the following, I explore various spiritual sources to interpret the open portal and the natural view of the garden and the mountain, which also reflect a blend of secular iconography and spiritual interpretation. After examining the motif on the upper-right-hand side of the composition, I describe the potential function of the bifolio as an aid in its owner's spiritual journey.

A noble residence frames the praying Laval and his courtiers. Although the wall in the backdrop resembles the wall behind the angels, it has an open door that gives the viewer a glimpse of a walled garden. Moving our look further, we see an arched exit that leads to a rural landscape and a mountain. Unlike the practice of comparison discussed earlier, which involves exploring different parts of the composition, the image of the garden and the landscape was designed to lead Laval to contemplate two layers of meaning. According to Barbara Newman, medieval Europeans were familiar with cultural objects that combined secular and theological concepts, content, and interpretations. She suggests that contemporary hermeneutics of intermingled texts in medieval French literature allowed for the

⁴⁰ For a case study showing that a sense of familiarity with a holy figure was a factor in the personal worship of a particular saint and in fixing her/him as an exemplar for enhancement, see Dafna Nissim, "Resemblance and Identification in Personal Devotion: The Images of St. Ursula Commissioned by Anne of Brittany," *Mediaevistik* 33 (2020, appeared in 2021): 213–39.

⁴¹ Dafna Nissim, "The Kiss of the Lips: Spirituality and Exegesis to the *Song of Songs* in Laval's Portrait Praying to Mary and the Infant," *Perspectives: Revue de l'Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem* 25 (2018): 209–29.

coexistence of different interpretations.⁴² In light of Newman's perspective on the interactive and reciprocal nature of the two subjects, the image in the upper left part of the right-hand folio could have suggested different meanings to its noble viewer that did not necessarily complement one another. It might, on the one hand, have signified his noble rank or, on the other hand, it could have had a spiritual significance and utilization and have been a reflection of a widespread metaphor of the spiritual process.

An open door is a symbolic element found in some panel paintings with donor portraits in fifteenth-century Netherlandish art. It serves to connect different spaces and to construct a dynamic visual movement in space. In a triptych created by Master of Flémalle (*Mérode Triptych*, ca. 1425), an open door held by the patrons Pieter Engelbrechts and his wife Marguerite Scrijnmakere links the left panel with the central one, which features the annunciation (fig. 5).⁴³ The couple, standing outside a domestic interior, glimpse Gabriel's message to Mary. The door represents a liminal space, which the couple from Mechelen has to cross to proceed on their spiritual journey. Ingrid Falque contends that the scene on the left panel and its link to the central one by the open door represent the idea of a movement, which is associated in medieval spiritual literature with a spiritual journey.⁴⁴ I interpret the open door in *Laval's Hours* to the same tradition. It signifies the movement of the soul and was designed to motivate the viewer to pursue his spiritual progress.

In medieval culture and thinking, a garden, especially an enclosed garden, served as an allegory that involved multilayered interpretations. Connected in the contemporary imagination to the biblical Garden of Eden and to the *hortus conclusus* of the *Song of Songs*, it offered various associations linked to virtues, the Fall, and earthly and divine love.⁴⁵ Especially from the twelfth century on, various commentaries on the *Song of Songs* refer to the Virgin Mary as a bride, and in a metaphorical approach she embodies the *hortus conclusus*. In his *Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum* (ca. 1125), Rupert of Deutz, a prolific twelfth-century theologian, demonstrated that he was aware of liturgical and homiletical traditions

⁴² Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 7.

⁴³ Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (see note 1), 107.

⁴⁴ Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (see note 1), 109.

⁴⁵ On the role of Mary in paintings depicting the enclosed garden and how the faithful perceived the garden as a reflection of the divine plan, see Nancy Miwa, "The Hortus Conclusus: Marian Iconography in the Late Middle Ages," Ph.D. diss., Drew University, Madison, NJ, 2011.



Fig. 5: Master of Flémalle, Mérode Triptych, ca. 1425, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain)

about the virginity of Mary drawn from the doctrine that she remained a virgin during Jesus's birth. He used the repetition of the words "enclosed garden" as an indication that the verses speak of the Virgin who was "closed" during her conception and the nativity.⁴⁶

In commentary on the *Song of Songs*, Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) contended that the description of the garden is a metaphor for the soul seeking to improve its spiritual state. He adapted the metaphor of the "inner garden of virtues," associated with God planting the virtues in the soul of the believer, discussed by theologians long before the twelfth century and combined this metaphor with the *Song of Songs*'s enclosed garden. In his commentary, the garden is an inner locus, a place where the soul can spiritually taste the plants of virtue.⁴⁷ The allegory of the enclosed garden, which flourished in the fifteenth century, appeared copiously in sermons, poems, and meditation manuals. In these texts, the reader was exhorted to sow and cultivate his/her virtues, symbolized by different flowers

⁴⁶ E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 160–63.

⁴⁷ Reindert Leonard Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child, 1450–1550*, trans. Sam Herman. *Oculi: Studies in the Arts of the Low Countries*, 5 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 1994), 19–20. For the image of the "inner garden of virtues" in patristic writings, see Ellen Kosmer, "Gardens of Virtue in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41.1 (1978): 302–07; here 302, note 3.

and plants, in order to fulfill the desired wedding with the Bridegroom, Christ. Reindert Falkenburg observes that one of the characteristics of the metaphor is the merging and shifting of different interpretations. The garden can represent Mary but can also stand for the soul of the believer.⁴⁸

Unlike many paintings that describe Mary in the *hortus conclusus*, the garden in Laval's painting is free of plants and flowers. It features green grass and a path leading to an arched exit. Rather than a locus for rest and contemplation, it seems like a place of transition, continuing the movement from the hall, through the open door to the rural area, and to the large steep mountain.

We can interpret the mountain in the painting as another symbol of spiritual ascension. Several late medieval spiritual writers in the Low Countries and France conveyed the idea of ascension through the metaphor of the mountain.⁴⁹ Jean Gerson (1363–1429), a known scholar who received his diploma of Doctor of Theology from the University of Paris, wrote a treatise entitled *The Mountain of Contemplation* (ca. 1400) in the vernacular for his sisters in which he likened the spiritual process to climbing a high and steep mountain. In a chapter on obstacles in reaching the mountain of contemplation, he described unsuccessful modes of climbing associated with deficient perseverance, presumption, or not fully trusting God's grace. Gerson warned his sisters: "Whoever thinks that without strong perseverance he can get to the summit and height of the mountain of contemplation or have the total warmth of God's ardent love, he is like a person who tries to climb a great mountain but always stops and descends before he gets to its heights as soon as he meets some difficulty or hindrance."⁵⁰

More than a text known to noble audiences, the *Mountain of Contemplation* reflects well-circulated ideas concerning devotion and spiritual ascension for the laity. In Chapter 37, Gerson described several modes of thought appropriate for contemplation and surveyed different methods suggested by various spiritual writers, including Richard of St. Victor, St. Jerome, and others. He also mentioned the *Horologium sapientiae* (ca. 1333), the work of the Dominican Henri Suso/Heinrich Seuse (1295–1366), which became one of the most popular spiritual texts in the fourteenth and fifteenth century with translations into several European languages. He explicitly stated that he would like to adapt the writing of his predecessors to the horizon of expectation of the simple people.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion* (see note 47), 50.

⁴⁹ Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (see note 1), 172–80.

⁵⁰ Jean Gerson, *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, trans. Brian P. McGuire. The Classics of Western Spirituality, 92 (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 108.

⁵¹ Gerson, *Jean Gerson: Early Works* (see note 50), 112.

Gerson was an important figure in the University of Paris.⁵² As a young theology student, he sought to expand his audience well beyond the university. He wrote several theological primers for the *gens simples* in French and gave sermons in the university and the royal court.⁵³ The mountain on the right side of the composition in *Laval's Hours* might well be a reflection of the metaphor in Gerson's *Mountain of Contemplation*. The artist painted an imaginative summit, a form and style not found in nature. Like other artistic strategies designed to create different levels of reality, the design of the mountain suggests its spiritual significance rather than a concrete representation. Together with other visual elements, the artist brought together several images known from contemporary treatises as symbols of spiritual progression.

Devotional images in panel paintings, illustrations in prayer books, and prints as tools for devotion became part of the realm of personal piety among the laity in the Western world on the threshold of the early modern period.⁵⁴ The image on fol. 51r in *Laval's Hours* with its unique iconography and the fact that it is part of a visual and textual program serves as an agency with a potency to influence the actions of the owner. The bifolio closes the cycle of prayers addressed to the Virgin (39v–49v), among them the *Obsecro te* and *O itemerata*. The prayer at the end of the cycle includes this plea to Mary: “[to imi]tate the good works, despise the prosperity of the world, and to perform such a penance in this life for all my crimes and sins, which is pleasing and are pleasing to him by your prayers and merits. So that he may obey me in another life, granting to me life and eternal rest with his chosen mercifully. Amen.”⁵⁵ The text directs the worshipper to perform an outward expression of repentance for having engaged in an immoral

52 In April 1395, Pope Benedict XIII nominated him as the chancellor of the University of Paris. Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2005), 68.

53 McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (see note 52), 47–51.

54 Long-lasting controversies over its optional perils for the souls of the believers were overcome by the eagerness of the laity to participate in spiritual practices, even minimally. On the change in attitudes toward images in the later medieval spiritual practice, see Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1984); Jeffrey Hamburger, “The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions,” *Viator* 20 (1989): 161–82; Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (see note 1), 251–70.

55 “[Imi]tari bonis / operibus habundare prospera mundi despiciere et talem penitenciam / in hac vita pro cunctis sceleribus et peccatis meis / peragere que ei precibus et meritis tuis bene / placens sit et grata. Ita ut pareat michi in alia / vita concedens michi misericorditer cum electis / suis vitam et requiem sempiternam. Amen.” I would like to thank Dimitri Tarat for his help in transcribing the text and for his translation.

act considered to be a transgression against divine law. After fulfilling this step, s/he is ready to move to the next stage described in spiritual texts as an advanced level in which s/he contemplates in “the secret place of silence.”⁵⁶ In this phase, the faithful are prepared to practice the elevation of the soul from the earthly level to an intermediate position where they can come closer to the love of God.

Clearly there were many ways that Louis of Laval was able to acquire devotional and spiritual benefit from the bifolio. From the writings of the Church Fathers, spiritual progression has been described in terms of a linear progression, a system employed to provide a straightforward and didactic presentation of the evolution of one’s spiritual life. However, in spite of the rigid structure delineated by Augustine, Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure, their writings describe it as a gradual process accompanied by turns and repetition of former stages, without the worldly activity of the devotee actually ceasing.⁵⁷ The bifolio encouraged the described mental and spiritual processes. As it comprises two-dimensional works of art in sequence with prayers, the meaning of the iconography was built during the enactment of the senses and cognition. The worshipper recited the prayers, moved his/her gaze from one point to another, and engaged in mental acts of comparison, and more. The depiction of the visionary meeting, divided by frames around the space of the holy figures and the space of the owner, invited the owner to develop a sense of familiarity with the Divine, a well-known devotional practice adapted in this case into artistic decisions. The iconography reflects *inter alia* spiritual notions and symbols. Laval was free to choose his way during his engagement with the mirror-like composition. Whether he started with contemplation on Mary, Christ, and the angels or selected another point of departure, the illustration offered him the opportunity to pave his own spiritual progress in a never-ending process.

⁵⁶ Gerson, *Jean Gerson* (see note 50), 95.

⁵⁷ Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (see note 1), 112.

Orly Amit

Between Psalter and “Mirrors for Princes”: On the Moral and Didactic Messages in BL Cotton MS Domitian A XVII

Abstract: In this study of a fifteenth-century illuminated text, I discuss the blurred boundaries of medieval book genres through a case study of a richly illuminated Psalter (BL, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII), produced in Paris in the early fifteenth century, which was originally intended for the dauphin Louis, Duke of Guyenne (1397–1415). Study of the text/image relationship within Louis’s personal Psalter reveals the intertextuality within the scenes in regard to the relationship between the reader/viewer and God and that between the owner and his destined role as a monarch. I argue that, among other concerns, the Psalter was designed to serve as a “Mirror of Princes,” to teach the moral values expected of an ideal prince and king. Hence, the book provided not only spiritual but also secular guidance, which was meant to shape the young prince’s identity and behavior patterns.

Keywords: Psalters; Books of hours; Book of Proverbs; contemplation; mirrors for princes (*Speculum principum*); Charles VI of France; Christine de Pizan; Louis, Duke of Guyenne

This study explores the blurred boundaries between medieval sacred and secular literary genres, within a richly illuminated personal Psalter (BL, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII).¹ The Psalter was originally produced for the dauphin Louis, Duke of Guyenne (1397–1415), circa 1405–1410,² and its iconographic program includes a cycle of eight miniatures marking the liturgical divisions of the Psalms.³ While

1 Nowadays, the manuscript contains 288 folios, measuring 20.5×15 cm. Its content: Calendar in French: ff. 2r–7v; Computistical, lunar tables for the years 1420–1462: 8r–11r; Psalter with Canticles, and Litany: 12r–288v.

2 Derek Howard Turner, *Illuminated Manuscripts Exhibited in the Grenville Library* (London: British Museum, 1967), no. 54; Janet Backhouse, “The Psalter of Henry VI (London, BL, MS Cotton Dom. A. XVII),” *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose, and Placement of Its Images*, ed. Frank O. Büttner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 329–36; here 331. Backhouse has suggested that the Psalter was given to the dauphin by his uncle, Louis Duke of Orléans (1372–1407), and his wife Valentina Visconti (1371–1408). Nevertheless, the question of the specific circumstances of this patronage will not be examined in the current paper.

3 These were painted on the recto of each leaf, with the first four lines of each relevant psalm written underneath the miniature. The eight-sections division follows the weekly liturgical cycle

the manuscript contains the sacred text – indicating its mainly liturgical function – I argue, that its pictorial program was designed to serve as a ‘mirror for princes’ (*Speculum principum*), a genre of political writing, demonstrating the moral values expected of the ideal prince. Previous studies mainly examined the blurred boundaries between sacred and secular literary genres by textual means,⁴ whereas the current study explores how these ‘crossovers’⁵ occurred through the text-image relationships within the manuscript, examining their interpretations. Furthermore, the blurring of boundaries between literary genres has not been examined within medieval personal prayer books before. Thus, the present case study expands the existing discourse.

Louis of Guyenne’s Psalter (hereafter: *Louis’s Psalter*), is closely linked to the political events that took place in France in the first decades of the fifteenth century. Six out of the eight miniatures feature a figure of a crowned prince whose robe was originally emblazoned with fleurs-de-lis, representing the original owner who died in 1415, at the age of eighteen.⁶ Between 1430 and 1431, the manuscript was given as a gift to Henry VI of England (1421–1471) in honor of his coronation as King of England and France. As part of the manuscript adaptation, the English arms were painted over the earlier depiction of the arms of France, in the prince’s portraits in the existing cycle. In addition, a new miniature cycle – featuring various religious communities engaged in prayer – was painted on the left-hand pages in each opening of the eightfold division.⁷ In this paper, I will focus on the original miniature cycle, produced for the dauphin Louis.

The royal origin of the Psalter and the fact that it was considered a worthy coronation present for Henry VI indicate the manuscript’s importance. This assumption is supported by the fact that during this period, books of hours were al-

found in secular use: psalms 1 (fol. 13r), 26 (fol. 50r), 38 (fol. 75r), 52 (fol. 98r), 68 (fol. 123r), 80 (fol. 151r), 97 (fol. 178r), and 109 (fol. 207r). The first seven psalms were recited at the beginnings of Matins from Sunday to Saturday, whereas Psalm 109 was recited first at Sunday Vespers.

4 For example, Stephen H. Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry: Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale and Medieval Political Theory* (Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 4) (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009); Jean Devaux, “From Biography to the Mirror for Princes: the *Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* by Christine de Pizan,” *Le Moyen-Age* 3–4 (2010): 591–604; Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013); Marta Celati, *Conspiracy Literature in Early Renaissance Italy: Historiography and Princely Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

5 Based on Newman’s definition, ‘crossover’ is not a genre by itself, but a mode of interaction between sacred and secular literary genres. Newman, *Medieval Crossover* (see note 4), 7–8.

6 The prince’s portraits appear on folios: 13r, 50r, 75r, 98r, 178r, and 207r.

7 On the second cycle, see Backhouse, “The Psalter of Henry VI” (see note 2), 131, 134–36.

ready the most common personal prayer books among the laity in France.⁸ So, producing a Psalter for personal use was quite peculiar. While previous scholarship described the miniatures in the cycle generally, they did not address the question of their meaning for the original owner.⁹ The following discussion examines how the young dauphin could have "read" and interpreted these images. My premise is that the late medieval prayer practice – which required readers to halt, gaze, imagine and reflect on the meanings of the text and the visual scenes – enabled the insertion of didactic messages for the dauphin. Examination of the text-image relationship in Louis's personal Psalter reveals intertextuality within the scenes, expressing the relationship between the reader/viewer and God, and between the owner and his intended role as the French monarch. Hence, the book provided not only spiritual guidance but also moral and political models, that were meant to construct the self-identity and behavior of the young prince.

First, I will discuss the general parallels between *Louis's Psalter* and the genre of 'mirrors for princes.' The discussion focuses on two mirrors that were written by Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) for the dauphin Louis, which feature key issues in the young prince's education. The main part of the paper will be devoted to miniatures from the cycle. The examination of these scenes will be conducted from a discussion of the meaning of each Psalm, an examination of its iconography and comparison with pictorial conventions of the period. This analysis will probe the intertextuality within the scenes, exploring the consistency of their messages with those in the mirror for princes written for Louis, transforming the prayer book itself into a type of 'mirror for princes.'

8 William Noel, "Books in the Home: Psalters and Books of Hours," *Medieval Mastery: Book Illumination from Charlemagne to Charles the Bold (800–1475)*, ed. William Noel and Lee Preedy (Turnhout and Leuven: Brepols, 2002), 57–67; here 57.

9 Turner, *Illuminated Manuscripts Exhibited in the Grenville Library*, no. 54 (see note 2); Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbours and Their Contemporaries*, 3 vols. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974) 1: 375, 405; Catherine Reynolds, "English Patrons and French Artists in Fifteenth-Century Normandy," *England and Normandy in the Middle Ages*, ed. David Bates and Anne Curry (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 299–313; here 304; Gregory T. Clark, "The Influence of the Limbourg Brothers in France and the Southern Netherlands," *The Limbourg Brothers: Nijmegen Brothers and the French Court 1400–1416*, ed. Rob Dückers and Pieter Roelofs (Amsterdam: Ludion, 2005), 209–35; Backhouse, "The Psalter of Henry VI" (see note 2), 329–36; Scot McKendrick, John Lowden, and Kathleen Doyle, *Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination* (London: British Library, 2011), no. 141.

Christine de Pizan's *Mirrors for Princes*

Louis of Guyenne was the third child of Charles VI (1368–1422) and Isabeau de Bavaria (1370–1435); he became the dauphin at the age of four, upon the death of his eldest brother. Due to his father's mental illness and the struggle for control between the Dukes of Orléans and Burgundy, the dauphin embodied the hope for the recovery of the monarchy.¹⁰ Hence, the education of the young dauphin was considered of paramount importance and entrusted with the most prominent humanists and theologians in France.¹¹ The need to prepare the dauphin for his future role led to the commission of Christine de Pizan's two 'mirrors for princes' during Louis's childhood and adolescence, which provided him with instructions and models for ideal kingship.¹²

The earlier mirror, *Livre du corps de policie*, was written between 1404 and 1407, around the time of the Psalter production. As its name suggests, Christine relied on the metaphor of the 'body politic,' as defined by John of Salisbury (ca. 1110–1180) in his *Policraticus* (ca. 1159),¹³ and accordingly, divided her text into three parts: On Princes, On Nobles and Knights, and On the Common People. The mirror's first part served as an "introduction of princes to a virtuous life,"¹⁴ where she elaborates on the three central characteristics the ideal prince should possess: "The first and most important, is to love, fear, and serve God ... Another is this: he ought solely to love the good and benefit of his people...The third is that he must love justice above all."¹⁵ Between 1412 and 1413 Christine wrote the *Livre de paix* in which she expanded upon topics already discussed in the *corps de policie*, mainly on the virtues of wisdom and prudence, the importance of good and

10 Angus J. Kennedy, "The Education of 'The Good Prince': Repetition and Variation in Christine de Pizan's *Livre du Corps de Policie* and the *Livre de Paix*," *"Contez me tout": mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Herman Braet*, ed. Catherine Bel, Pascale Dumont, and Frank Willaert (Paris: Peeters Publishers, 2006), 507–25; here 510.

11 Among them: Jean d'Arsonval (d. 1416), Jean Gerson (1363–1429), Christine de Pizan, Nicolas de Clémanges (1363–1437) and Jean de Montreuil (1418–1354). Kennedy, "The Education of 'The Good Prince'" (see note 10), 510.

12 On the 'mirrors for princes' written for the dauphin Louis, see Kennedy, "The Education of 'The Good Prince'" (see note 10), 507–10.

13 This metaphor defines the head of the 'body politic' as the prince, the heart as the prince's counselors, the soul as the clergy, the hands as the soldiers, and the feet as the peasantry. On the *Policraticus*, see Kate Langdon Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 36–38.

14 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. and trans. Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), I.33: 55.

15 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.6: 11.

wise counselors, the devotion to public duty, and above all, respect for God's laws. While Christine's works follow the central theme and construct of the conventional 'mirrors for princes',¹⁶ these particular themes she emphasizes reveal the main governmental challenges of her period, which were central considerations in planning Louis's education. In fact, the chronicles of the period describe that in his adolescence, the prince led a lavish lifestyle, neglected his public and political duties, and surrounded himself with wicked advisers.¹⁷ It could explain why Christine repeated and elaborated on those specific themes in the *Livre de paix*.¹⁸

A Parallel can be discerned between the main features of 'mirrors for princes' – especially Christine's works – and the original pictorial cycle in *Louis's Psalter*. The first and most fundamental requirement from the ideal prince is to love and respect God and his laws, which stand also at the core of the personal prayer books. Chapter 3 of the *corps de police* deals with the education of young princes and opens with the statement: "Because we are expressly commanded to love God, the first thing is to introduce the child of the prince to this love very early and to teach him simple little prayers appropriate to the understanding of the child."¹⁹ Christine continues to explain that as those children get older, they should learn to hear Mass and to say their Hours.²⁰ This notion is represented at the *Beatus vir* page in *Louis's Psalter*, which opens the Sunday Matins. Beneath the Psalm's first verse, a framed miniature depicts the young prince at prayer in front of an altar (fig. 1). This depiction probably refers to the second verse of the Psalm: "Rather, the law of the Lord is his joy; and on his law he meditates day and night."²¹ Thus, the prince's miniature at the beginning of the first Psalm demonstrates the first main theme in Christine's 'mirror for princes,' which stands at the core of the other values that are expected from him, since it is the desire to please God that will motivate the prince to have a virtuous life. Furthermore, to a certain extent, the mere ownership and usage of the Psalter – the basic tool for private devotion – are by themselves a fulfillment of the fundamental requirement from the ideal prince.

16 On the structure and conventions of the genre of 'mirrors for princes', see Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), xvii–xx.

17 Louis Bellaguet, *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denis contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, 6 vols. (Paris: L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1839–1852), 5: 17, 29; Jean Juvénal des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI, roy de France* (Paris: A. Desrez, 1841), 485, 502.

18 Kennedy, "The Education of 'The Good Prince'" (see note 10), 510.

19 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.3: 5.

20 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), 5–6.

21 Scripture quotations are from the New American Bible (Revised Edition).



Fig. 1: Psalm 1: The young prince at prayer, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 13r (© British Library Board)

Secondly, the late medieval prayer practice required readers to meditate and reflect on the meanings of the text and the visual scenes in their illuminated prayer books. These devotional practices of meditation and contemplation through visual literacy allowed the believers to acquire spiritual and physical attentiveness, which enabled them to draw closer to the divine, while simultaneously bringing about a change in the individual's self-perception.²² The concept of self-examination is also present in the 'mirror' (*speculum*) metaphor, which served as a means for self-reflection.²³ As a result, 'mirrors for princes' tended to provide models for comparison through examples of virtuous behaviors, designed to encourage the royal reader to identify with these ideal *exempla*. Most of those exemplars were demon-

²² See, for example, Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and Their Books of Hours* (London: British Library, 2003); idem, "Book, Body, and the Construction of the Self in the Taymouth Hours," *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe*, ed. Kathryn Smith, and Scott Wells (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 173–204; eadem *The Taymouth Hours: Stories and the Construction of the Self in Late Medieval England* (London: The British Library, 2012); Joni M. Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity in Northern Europe, 1350–1550* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013); Alexa K. Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²³ On this metaphor, see Forhan, *The Political Theory* (see note 13), 30–36.

strated by Christian saints and classical figures. Similarly, the Psalter provides its royal readers an exemplar for the ideal monarch through its author, King David, who was considered the prototype for the ideal Christian king.²⁴ From the second half of the thirteenth century, the most widely-used iconographic program in Western Europe's Psalters was the ‘Parisian system’ of illumination, which focused on King David.²⁵ Nevertheless, David's figure appears at only one page in *Louis's Psalter*, whereas in other scenes where he was traditionally featured in, his figure was replaced by the dauphin's portrait. Therefore, the miniatures not only allowed the young prince to contemplate on the Psalms written by the biblical king, but also encouraged him to identify meditatively with David's ideal persona. Alongside King David, the manuscript's iconographic program also uses various saints as role models for its royal reader, as I will discuss below.

The Virtues of Wisdom and Prudence

At the core of the ‘mirrors for princes’ genre stood the belief that the ruler's virtuous life is the key to the prosperity of his kingdom and his people. By the later Middle Ages, the mirrors' authors distinguished wisdom (*sapientia*) and prudence (*prudentia*) as the most important virtues for secular government.²⁶ Those writers followed the Aristotelian concept of ‘practical wisdom,’ and stressed that the ideal prince should bear two types of wisdom: *sapientia*, which was regarded as a heavenly gift of divine knowledge – and as such, mostly a contemplative virtue; and *prudentia*, that was considered a practical and obtainable skill of scholarly learning, and putting this knowledge into action.²⁷ Following her predecessors, in *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (1404) – a biography on the late king which is also considered a kind of ‘mirror for princes’ – Christine states

24 Harvey Stahl, *Picturing Kingship: History and Painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 1.

25 James McKinnon, “The Late Medieval Psalter: Liturgical or Gift Book?,” *Musica Disciplina* 38 (1984): 133–57; here 135.

26 Forhan, *The Political Theory* (see note 13), 83; Samantha Kelly, *The New Solomon: Robert of Naples (1309–1343) and Fourteenth-Century Kingship*. The Medieval Mediterranean, 48 (Leiden, and Boston: Brill, 2003), 261–63; Laura Fábíán, “The Biblical King Solomon in Representations of Western European Medieval Royalty,” *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, ed. Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Russell Martin, and Zita Eva Rohr (London, and New York: Routledge, 2019), 54–69; here 585–9.

27 Fábíán, “The Biblical King Solomon” (see note 26), 59.

that prudence and wisdom are the mother and guide of all the other virtues.²⁸ Consequently, she puts a great emphasis on these two virtues throughout the *corps de policie* and the *Livre de paix*.

The emphasis on those royal virtues is also present in the pictorial cycle of Louis's *Psalter*, as, for example, in the miniature of Psalm 26(27), which opens the Monday Matins (fig. 2). Following the psalm's *titulus* – “*Psalmus David priusque liniretur*” (“A psalm for David before he was anointed”) – the customary pictorial subjects for this psalm in medieval psalters were David's coronation or his anointment.²⁹ Instead, the current miniature presents a visionary scene, in which St. Louis IX (1214–1270) introduces the young prince to the Virgin and Child. St. Louis was both the personal patron saint of the dauphin – as his name's sake – and the patron saint of the monarchy. The inscription on the scroll reads: “*Da michi, Domine, assistricem sapienciam ut sicam quid acceptum sit coram te omni tempore*” (“O God, give me wisdom, the consort [at your throne], that I may know what is pleasing unto thee at all times”). This inscription is a combination of verses 4 and 11 from the *Wisdom of Solomon* 9.³⁰ Considering the psalm's *titulus*, this reference may allude to the liturgy of the French coronation, where during the consecration's prayer the archbishop asks God to adorn the new king with the wisdom of Solomon, so he could always please God (“*Salomonis sapientia decorates, tibi in omnibus complaceat*”).³¹

28 In this work Christine portrays the wise king as a contemporary exemplum of ideal kingship and urges her royal readers to follow his deeds, thus, transforming the biography into a ‘mirror for princes.’ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente (Paris: Champion, 1936), I.22: 72; Michael Richarz, “Prudence and Wisdom in Christine de Pizan's *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*,” *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews. Disputatio, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 99–116.

29 As can be seen, for example, in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*, fol. 45r: Lucy Freeman Sandler, “Psalter Illustration and the Rise of Coronation Imagery in Medieval England,” *Journal of Medieval History* 46.3 (2020): 251–83; here 256.

30 The *Book of Wisdom* is part of the Old Testament's Wisdom literature. Its core subject (6:22–10:21) deals with the nature and the power of Wisdom – which is personified as a female figure – and Solomon's quest for her. In chapter 9:1–12 the king prays for God to send Wisdom, the Lord's heavenly throne-companion, to be the author-king's guide and guardian.

31 *Ordines Coronationis Franciae: Texts and Ordines for the Coronation of Frankish and French Kings and Queens in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard A. Jackson (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 486. Moreover, the archbishop anointed the king in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – all of whom are presented in the miniature – while the choir sang the Antiphon: “Zadok the priest and the prophet Nathan anointed Solomon King in Jerusalem, and did proclaim this right joyfully, saying, May the king live forever” (“*Unxerunt Salomonem Sadoch Sac-*



Fig. 2: Psalm 26(27): The young prince presented by St Louis to the Virgin and Child, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 50r (© British Library Board)

Furthermore, from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, the authors of ‘mirrors for princes’ used King Solomon as an exemplar for wise kingship.³² St. Louis

erdos et Nathan propheta regem in Gyon, et accedentes leti dixerunt, “Vivat rex in eternum.”). Ordines Coronationis Franciae (see note 31), 488.

³² Kelly, *The New Solomon* (see note 26), 261–63; Fábíán, “The Biblical King Solomon” (see note 26), 58–59.

was one of the most prominent French kings considered a Solomonic model.³³ In fact, in both art and writing of the period St. Louis was perceived to have even surpassed the biblical king, since Louis IX always ruled with divine wisdom, while Solomon became idolatrous on his older days.³⁴ For the French kings, St. Louis embodied the model for ideal Christian kingship (*Rex christianissimus*) due to his piety and justice, which distinguished him as a ruler.³⁵ As a result, most of the ‘mirrors for princes’ written for the French monarchs throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, are based on the ideals set by St. Louis in his kingship ideology.³⁶ Thus, St. Louis’s figure in the miniature not only bestows on the dauphin his patronage, but also serves as an exemplar for *Rex sapiens* (*Wisdom of Solomon* 6: 23) and *Rex christianissimus*.

This theme also continues at the next miniature in the cycle, at the beginning of Psalm 38(39) which opens Tuesday Matins. The prince once again turns to the Virgin and Child, this time accompanied by St. Catherine of Alexandria, identified by the wheel (fig. 3). The Child holds a scroll that presents verse 14 from Psalm 33(34): “*labia tua ne loquantur dolum*” (“[keep] your lips from speaking deceit”), which is also consistent with the beginning of the current psalm: “I said, I will keep watch over my ways so that I do not sin with my tongue....” This intertextuality between the Psalms may have been intended to simulate a dialogue between God and the dauphin: the scroll presents Christ’s demand, while the first verse of the psalm presents the prince’s response and commitment to follow this demand. Like so, the miniature encourages the real prince to imagine and meditate upon the dialogue and follow it.

St. Catherine, who accompanies the young prince, was a most learned noblewoman, and her cult was associated with scholarly pursuits. According to her *vita*, prior to her martyrdom she participated in a philosophical debate, where she defended the Christian faith against fifty pagan scholars.³⁷ Since blasphemy was con-

33 Marianne Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 111–15, 120–23, 130–31, 236; Fábíán, “The Biblical King Solomon” (see note 26), 58–59.

34 Alyce A. Jordan, *Visualizing Kingship in the Windows of the Sainte-Chapelle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 80–83; Meredith Parsons Lillich, “King Solomon in Bed, Archbishop Hincmar, the ‘Ordo’ of 1250, and the Stained-Glass Program of the Nave of Reims Cathedral,” *Speculum* 80 (2005), 764–801; Meredith Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

35 Whitney Stoddard, *Art and Architecture in Medieval France: Medieval Architecture, Sculpture, Stained Glass, Manuscripts, the Art of the Church Treasures* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 169.

36 Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis* (see note 33), 201.

37 Sherry L. Reames, “St. Katherine and the Late Medieval Clergy: Evidence from English Breviaries,” *St. Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, ed. Jacqueline



Fig. 3: Psalm 38(39): The young prince presented by St Catherine to the Virgin and Child, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 75r (© British Library Board)

Jenkins and Katherine L. Lewis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 201–20; here 203. The Limbourg brothers devoted a detailed pictorial cycle to St. Catherine in the *Belles Heures* (New York, The Cloisters, 54.1.1) of Jean of Berry (1340–1416). According to Carla Funk, the central place given to the saint in this manuscript stems precisely from her status as the patroness of learning, which the Duke of Berry had valued. Carla Funk, “The City is a Prison, the Desert Paradise’: Hagiographic Promotion of Carthusian Monasticism in the *Belles Heures*,” *Atharion* 15 (1997): 6–12; here 7.

sidered one of the major sins of the tongue,³⁸ this episode of the saint's life could explain her appearance at the beginning of the current Psalm. Furthermore, as the patron saint of learning, St. Catherine also serves as an exemplar for scholarly learning (*prudentia*), which provides the knowledge that allows avoiding sins of the tongue. In Christine's words: "The young prince who loves God will be afraid to do anything against His reverence and commandment, and will work hard to know everything that he ought to do and what he should avoid."³⁹ Thus, the miniatures of St. Louis and St. Catherine are related to each other both through their iconography – saintly figures who present the dauphin to the Virgin and Child – and by the didactic theme they express. The miniatures demonstrate the two types of wisdom that prince Louis must possess, using the two saints as *exempla*.

The importance of these virtues is further expressed in the miniature of Psalm 52(53), which follows and opens the Wednesday Matins. Here, the prince is presented in prayer before Christ as the Man of Sorrow (*Vir dolorum*) (fig. 4).⁴⁰ Behind the prince, a fool (*insapiens*), who wears the yellow robe, calls out: "*Non est deus*" ("There is no God"), based on the psalm's second verse, while the prince himself declares: "*Rex meus et deus meus*" ("My king and my God"), a phrase that appears in several Psalms, but not in the present one. The fool was a common pictorial subject in medieval illustrations of this psalm; however, he was usually depicted beside King David.⁴¹ Therefore, the prince's figure once again takes the place of the biblical king, becoming the embodiment of the *exempla*. Contrary to the fool's blasphemy, the prince's declaration – which recognizes the divinity of Christ – represents his status as a devout king. In fact, the depiction of Christ as the Man of Sorrow creates a visual connotation to Christine's remark about blasphemy in the *corps de policie*: "... everyone swears horribly at every word about the torment of the passion of our redeemer, and they forsake and deny him."⁴² This reading proves the significance of wisdom and prudence, since it is the lack of knowledge that prevents the fool from seeing the divine truth and, consequently, leads to the sins of his tongue.

The miniature also includes two courtiers with livery collars, who witness the prince's declaration of allegiance. Janet Backhouse recognized that the figure on the left wears the livery collar of the broomcod badge, associated with Charles

38 On Christine's approach toward blasphemy, see Kennedy, "Christine de Pizan, Blasphemy, and the Dauphin, Louis de Guyenne," *Medium Ævum* 83.1 (2014): 104–20.

39 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.7: 11.

40 The miniature was cut from its original page and re-attached to the manuscript in a later stage.

41 McKinnon, "The Late Medieval Psalter" (see note 25), 138.

42 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.8: 15.



Fig. 4: Psalm 52(53): The young prince praying before Christ as Man of Sorrow, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 98r (© British Library Board)

VI, the dauphin's father, representing loyalty and affinity to the monarch.⁴³ The broomcod badge served as a token, similar to the jewels that were given to loyal and brave soldiers by the rulers in Roman times. In the *corps de policie* Christine cites this ancient custom and urges the prince to resume this habit, so he could reward those who are loyal to him and encourage others to follow their steps.⁴⁴

⁴³ On the badge, see Laurent Hablot, “L'ordre de la Cosse de genêt de Charles VI: mise en scène d'une devise royale,” *Revue française d'héraldique et de sigillographie* 69–70 (1999–2000): 132–48.

⁴⁴ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.29: 50–51.

The inclusion of the pendant – which connects the scene to the prince’s present-day – serves as a reminder of the monarchy’s unstable state, which stresses Louis’s responsibility to lead his subjects by being a role model, and to reward those who follow his *exempla*.

The Importance of Good Counsel

Another key theme in both of Christine’s mirrors, is the necessity of the good prince to surround himself with “wise and prudent men and good councilors, who love his soul and honor.”⁴⁵ In the *Livre de paix*, Christine explains this through a quote from the *Book of Proverbs*: “For wisdom (*sapientia*) will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; Discretion (*consilium*) will guard you, Understanding (*prudentia*) will watch over you.”⁴⁶ In both mirrors, Christine dedicates multiple chapters to elaborate on the importance of good council, to explain which counselors could be considered as good and suitable, and what are the dangers imbued in following bad counselors.⁴⁷ In the Psalter, this theme is introduced already at the beginning of the first Psalm: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.”

In *Louis’s Psalter*, the *Beatus* page includes three scenes; two miniatures appear above the Psalm’s text: the upper one presents the battle between David and Goliath, and in the lower image David is playing his harp (fig. 5). As mentioned above, the third scene appears beneath the text and depicts the young prince in prayer (fig. 1). The central scene of David playing the harp was a common pictorial theme at the beginning of the psalms, representing his role as the book author.⁴⁸ The enthroned David is leaning toward a group of courtiers on his right, while turning his back to the pair on his left. One of these figures wears an orange robe with a distinctive pattern, which resembles the one on the fool’s robe in the miniature of Psalm 52(53). Due to this resemblance, Backhouse suggested

45 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.19: 35.

46 *Proverbs* 2: 10–11. Cited in: Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, ed. and trans. Karen Grenn, Constant J. Mews, Janice Pinder, and Tania Van Hemelryck (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), I.9: 76–77.

47 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), part I, chap. 7, 7, 20, 22–24: 11–13, 36–38, 39–43; Christine de Pizan, *Book of Peace* (see note 46), part I, chap. 7, 7, 9–12: 72–74, 76–85.

48 Howard Helsinger, “Images on the Beatus Page of Some Medieval Psalters,” *The Art Bulletin* 53.2 (1971): 161–76; here 161.

that the harp scene deals with the choice between good and evil counselors, and, therefore, serves as a literal representation of the first verse.⁴⁹



Fig. 5: Psalm 1: David fighting Goliath; King David playing his harp, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 13r (© British Library Board)

The battle between David and Goliath is presented as a judicial combat: the two figures fight in a closed arena, while King Saul watches from a raised stand. Even though the biblical story of the battle (*Samuel 1* 17: 8–10) could be interpreted as a judicial combat, it was not a common presentation in medieval psalters, so this representation is intriguing. Legally, during the later Middle Ages judicial combats were authorized in cases where there was insufficient evidence to prove the

⁴⁹ Backhouse, “The Psalter of Henry VI” (see note 2), 332.

guilt of the accused, or his innocence, by accepted judicial means. There is a possibility that King Saul's presence in the miniature was intended to commemorate the contemporary French laws, which stipulated that the trial would take place by the king's order and in his presence.⁵⁰ If so, the miniature relates to the theme of justice mentioned in the fifth verse of the psalm: "Therefore, the wicked will not arise in judgment, nor will sinners in the assembly of the just," while demonstrating the role of the king, who serves as the supreme judicial authority in the kingdom – besides God himself. However, if the scene does refer to the fifth verse, it was more fitting to paint it beneath the harp scene, which refers to the first verse.⁵¹ Therefore, I would like to offer an alternative reading of the scene, one related to a contemporary event.

The last official duel approved by the King and the French parliament occurred in 1386, in the presence of Charles VI and his family. This duel took place between Jean de Carrouges (1330–1396) and Jacques Le Gris (ca. 1330–1386) on the charge that the latter raped de Carrouges's wife.⁵² Although de Carrouges defeated Le Gris in their combat, the latter pleaded his innocence even in his last moments. This combat was documented in several chronicles, which present different versions of the event. While the earliest accounts, such as the *Chroniques* (ca. 1390–1391) of Jean Froissart (1337–1405) do not cast doubt on Le Gris's guilt,⁵³ the later chronicles include the testimony of another anonymous criminal, who confessed on his deathbed that he was the one who raped de Carrouges's wife. This testimony, being based on a rumor, provoked a long-standing controversy in the Parisian court over the question of Le Gris's innocence – which lasted into the first decades of the fifteenth century. The writers of later chronicles – such as Jean de Waurin (1398–1474) and Michel Pintoin (ca. 1350–1421) – claimed that de Carrouges acted on false advice (*consili*), which led to the commission of injustice.⁵⁴

50 Des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI* (see note 17), 443–44.

51 Such an arrangement of the two scenes appears, for example, in the *Beatus* page in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* (New York, The Cloisters, Inv. 69. 86, fol. 15r).

52 For an in-depth examination of the case see Eric Jager, *The Last Duel* (New York: Broadway Books, 2004).

53 Jean Froissart, *Sir John Froissart's Chronicles of England, France, Spain, and the Adjoining Countries: From the Latter Part of the Reign of Edward II to the Coronation of Henry IV*, trans. Thomas Johnes (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1868), 2: 240–44.

54 Michel Pintoin, *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, ed. Louis Bellaguet (Paris: L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1852), 7: chap. XI; Jehan de Waurin, *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne, a present nomme Engleterre*, ed. William Hardy (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1879), 5: chap. vi.

The combination of the text of the Psalms and the depiction of the judicial combat might have evoked the social memory of this controversial duel, reinforcing the importance of avoiding false counsel. Thus, the top two scenes on the *Beatus* page emphasize the importance of pursuing justice and not following the advice of the wicked, as suggested in the first verse of the psalm. This moral value is important for any Christian believer, but especially essential for the future king, as Christine's mirrors have stressed.

The Good and Benefit of his People

As mentioned above, one of the three main requirements from the ideal prince is his devotion to public duty. According to Christine, "the good prince desires his people's welfare more than his own,"⁵⁵ and should conduct himself as a good shepherd who leads and guards his sheep.⁵⁶ The prince's subjects – mainly from the aristocracy – are presented throughout the pictorial cycle of *Louis's Psalter*, as witnesses to the visionary and biblical scenes (figs. 2, 4–5). The most prominent message regarding the prince's obligation for his subjects is featured in the last scene of the cycle.

The miniature of Psalm 109(110), which opens Sunday Vespers, depicts the hierarchy of faith in the French kingdom (fig. 6). At the bottom of the composition, the young prince kneels in prayer before the Virgin, calling out: "*auxilium meum a domino*" ("My helper with the Lord"), while a group of courtiers stands behind him, signifying the French people. The Virgin turns to her Son and presents her breast to him. Christ, in turn, directs his gaze to God the Father, who sits beside him, and shows him his side wounds while his feet rest upon figures in exotic attire, a literal presentation of the psalm's first verse: "The Lord says to my lord: Sit at my right hand, while I make your enemies your footstool."

Four courtiers stand in a row behind the young prince, preforming various prayer gestures toward the Virgin. The two figures closest to the prince wear red and yellow robes with livery collars around their necks, similar to the two courtiers from the miniature of Psalm 52(53). Hence, this visionary scene demonstrates their reward for following the prince's virtuous exemplum: to be guided into Heaven. Moreover, since the ideal prince should desire his people's welfare more than his own, it is reasonable to assume that the prince's plea of the Virgin is not intended for his sole salvation but mostly for his subjects that, literally, fol-

55 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.12: 21.

56 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic* (see note 14), I.9: 15–19.



Fig. 6: Psalm 109(110): The young prince before God, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 207r (© British Library Board)

low his lead. Thus, the miniature that closes the pictorial cycle reminded the dauphin of his most crucial role as the future monarch: to rule justly and in accordance with God's law, so he could lead his people to their salvation.

In conclusion, this paper demonstrated how the pictorial cycle of Louis of Guyenne's Psalter – mostly comprised of biblical and visionary scenes – provided the dauphin with *exempla* of the moral values expected of the ideal prince, similarly to 'mirrors for princes.' Thus, the text-image relationship within the personal prayer book blurred the boundaries between the sacred psalms and the genre of political-didactic literature. During his prayers, the young prince was expected to meditate and contemplate upon those scenes, which embodied themes he also encountered in the works Christine de Pizan wrote and dedicated to him at that period. Of

course, this repetition does not necessarily imply a collaboration or a direct influence between Christine and the manuscript workshop, but it does indicate how central those themes were in Louis's education. As this analysis shows, the illumination of *Louis's Psalter* can posit further reflections of the blurred boundaries between sacred and secular genres in the Middle Ages. In doing so, this case study expands the current discourse, demonstrating how these crossovers can be examined through pictorial, and not merely by textual, means. Future studies on *Louis's Psalter* could explore the broader intertextual and moral scope enabled by the second pictorial cycle that was added to it, while considering the changes in ownerships of the manuscript, and its adaptation and appropriation for Henry VI.

Karen Casey Casebier

Visual and Textual Authority: Reading *Chevalier* in Manuscripts of *La Vie des pères*

Abstract: This article explores the text and image of *Chevalier*, a tale from *La Vie des pères*. In this miracle tale, a pious knight is so enraptured by the Mass that he fails to report to the tournament field, foregoing an opportunity to win earthly glory and riches in favor of spiritual enlightenment. He then learns that the Virgin Mary has replaced him in the tournament and has defeated all the knights on the field. The story highlights the conflation between the sacred and the profane by heightening the tension between the knight's secular pursuits and his religious devotion. However, *Chevalier* is also a tale that conflates text and image, precisely because a coherent narrative whose edifying message demonstrates the essential Christian truth of faith, grace, and mercy only emerges when the illuminations that accompany it in the original manuscript are 'read' together with the text.

Keywords: Chrétien de Troyes; Fauvel Master; John of Salisbury; Mauberge Master; *mêlée*; paratext; tournament; *La Vie des pères*; Virgin Mary

Reading medieval literature in its original, manuscript form enriches the aesthetic pleasure of the text for the modern reader, but it also imitates the practical experience of the medieval reader, who relied on textual and paratextual cues to interpret both the didactic and aesthetic aspects of the text, integrating both word and image to create meaning. While modern literary scholars sometimes privilege text over image, and thus minimize the importance of the manuscript as both physical object and *objet d'art* because of contemporary notions regarding the primacy of the written word and the mistaken assumption that paratextual material is of little importance to our understanding of medieval literature, textual criticism without consideration of the codicological context overlooks the vital role of miniatures and historiated letters when they assume a narrative function rather than a decorative one.¹ Indeed, Sara Offenberg argues in favor of the interdisciplinary study of manuscripts, reminding scholars that "the manuscript is a body of work that

¹ Keith Busby suggests that the widespread use of critical editions that disregard the paratext "has reduced the distance between us and the object of our investigations to the point of distortion," although it in no way diminishes their value to contemporary scholars; see his *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, Faux Titre 221222, 2 vols. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002), 1: 63.

contains not only written text, but also other visual elements that are equally important to the manuscript's user."²

In fourteenth-century manuscripts of *La Vie des pères*, the miracle tale entitled *Chevalier* is an example of a narrative that conflates text and image, integrating the textual authority of the scribe with the visual authority of the illuminator, so that the miniatures complete, rather than complement, the narrative.³ Hans Robert Jauss's early studies on manuscript culture insist that the medieval reader was a reader of symbols, and as such, the medieval book predisposes the reader to specific types of reception by "announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions."⁴ These signals and allusions refer to the paratext, extratextual material such as *tituli*, rubrics, historiated letters and miniatures that influence the reader's interpretation of the text by providing visual and verbal glosses on the narrative. Similarly, in his analysis of modern works, Gérard Genette acknowledges the diverse forms and functions of extra-textual material, but he also insists that the paratext is subordinate to the text since it derives from it and is dependent upon the former to transmit messages to the reader.⁵

In the current debate over the meaning and uses of extra-textual material, Charlotte Cooper problematizes the paratext, which Genette defines as "an assorted set of practices and discourses," maintaining that the widespread use of this ill-defined term "suggests that its elements are somehow secondary to the text: they surround it, are found beside or adjacent to it; the connotation is that paratext is marginal, and therefore less important."⁶ While Genette does suggest that the paratext is subordinate to the text, he also identifies the paratext as a privileged discourse that, when read in context, acquires the performative authority of an illo-

2 Sara Offenberg, *Illuminated Piety: Pietistic Texts and Images in the North French Hebrew Miscellany*, Sources and Studies in the Literature of Jewish Mysticism, 35 (Los Angeles, CA: Cherub Press, 2013), 15. See also Daniel Abrams, "Kabbalistic Paratext," *Kabbalah* 26 (2012): 7–24.

3 "Chevalier," *La Vie des pères*, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 71 A 24, fols. 123r, col. C–123v, col. C (hereafter, MS k). The two other manuscripts are "Chevalier," *La Vie des pères*, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, MS 9229–30, fols. 122r, col. B–122v, col. C (hereafter, MS i) and "Chevalier," *La Vie des pères*, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5204, fol. 147r, col. A–C (hereafter, MS d). This study employs Félix Lecoy's manuscript sigla. *La Vie des pères*, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris, Société des anciens textes français, 1987–1999). Note that six of the interpolation's miracle tales are the earliest known vernacular versions in Old French.

4 Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*, ed. Kenneth M. Newton (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 189–94; here 191.

5 Gérard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22.2 (1991): 261–72; here 269–70.

6 Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext" (see note 5), 262; Charlotte E. Cooper, "What is Medieval Paratext?," *Marginalia* 19 (2015): 37–50; here 37.

cutionary act, maintaining that the paratext has the potential to control the reader's interpretation of the text.⁷ Cooper also theorizes that applying the modern idea of paratext to manuscript culture minimizes the differences between medieval and modern book production, but Jauss's emphasis on the importance of the paratextual apparatus to the reception of the text by the medieval reader insists upon these differences by allowing modern scholars to nuance our understanding of medieval reading. Simply put, Jauss refuses to marginalize the paratext to a decorative function that merely enriches the reader's experience, and he explicitly acknowledges both the role of extratextual material in creating multiple layers of meaning, as well as its potential to contribute to the didactic or narrative interpretation of medieval literature. Similarly, Michael Camille's study of manuscript art concludes that both the miniatures and marginalia of medieval manuscripts are tethered to the text, suggesting that artists read or misread the text to better play upon it, so that "the script shares equality with image and margin."⁸ Thus, although once deemed inessential, the auxiliary discourse of the paratext in the medieval manuscript is neither privileged nor marginalized; rather, it serves to create a symbiotic relationship between text, image and reader that can only be reproduced when contemporary scholars read medieval literature in its original, manuscript form.

Such is the case with *Chevalier*, where the absence of textual detail requires the reader to read the miniatures as part of the narrative because the written tale is incomplete without the visual image that fills in its textual gaps. In this tale, the eponymous knight misses a tournament because he remains at mass all day, while the other knights simultaneously witness him performing unparalleled feats of chivalry on the tournament field. When the pious knight concludes that the Virgin Mary must have replaced him in the games, the miracle cannot be confirmed by the protagonist, who was in church at the time, nor by the eyewitness testimony of the other knights, since there is no written account of the tournament. On the contrary, the knight's assumption is not confirmed verbally by the text, but by the visual corroboration of two-panel miniatures that depict a fully-armed Queen of Heaven competing in a *mêlée*. Thus, the visual authority of the paratext rivals the textual authority of the narrative by clarifying ambiguous events for both the protagonist and the reader that would be completely obscured without the codicological context.

7 Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext" (see note 5), 261, 269.

8 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 156.

Manuscript illuminations in anthologies of devotional literature frequently play a critical role in the reception of the text by highlighting important narrative episodes or by emphasizing a spiritual lesson, so that they provide visual commentary on or inspire contemplation of the text by pre-interpreting the edifying lesson that follows them, but *Chevalier*'s paratextual apparatus cannot be marginalized because its miniatures convey narrative meaning. They are vital not only to interpreting the narrative, but also for understanding its concomitant spiritual lesson of faith. In the epilogue, the knight decides to abandon chivalry in favor of more spiritual pursuits. The knight's humble service to God, which consists of remaining in the church to hear all of the day's masses, contrasts with the Virgin's unparalleled chivalric exploits on the tournament field, and the knight's dilemma between secular duty and personal desire is vividly illustrated by the two-panel miniatures that accompany the text in fourteenth-century manuscripts of *La Vie des pères*. Moreover, although they do not preclude reflection on of the narrative, the miniatures work together with the *exemplum* to demonstrate its essential spiritual truth that God's grace and mercy is extended to faithful Christians, even when they do not explicitly request it.

Chevalier is the first known extant Old French verse version of a popular Latin miracle tale, and it enters Old French literature as Miracle 5 in an interpolation of ten miracle tales in a fourteenth-century manuscript branch of *La Vie des pères*.⁹ There are several variants in prose that post-date the verse version, and this tale is also represented in compendiums of German and Spanish miracle tales.¹⁰ *La Vie*

9 For an early review of the interpolation's possible sources, see Joseph Morawski, "Mélanges de littérature pieuse," *Romania* 61:242 (1935): 145–209; here 199–200. Latin versions of this miracle tale include Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles: Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis, Dialogus miraculorum, Textum ad quatuor codicum manuscriptorum editionisque principis fidem*, ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne and Brussels: J. M. Heberle and H. Lempertz, 1851); the *Alphabetum Narrationum* formerly attributed to Etienne de Besançon but likely composed by Arnoldus of Liège: *An Alphabet of Tales: An English 15th-Century Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum of Etienne de Besançon, from additional MS Add. 25719 of the British Museum*, ed. Mary MacLeod Banks (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., Ltd., 1904, 1905); Jacobi a Voragine's *Legenda Aurea: La Légende dorée*, ed. Alain Boureau et al., Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 504 (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); Bartholemew of Trent: Ivo Paltrinieri and Giovanni Sangalli, "Un'Opera Finora Sconosciuta: 'Il Liber Miraculorum B.M.V.' di Fra B. Tridentino," *Salesianum* 12 (1950): 372–97; and Gil de Zamora's *Liber de Iesu et Mariae*: Fidel Fita, "Cincuenta leyendas por Gil de Zamora combinadas con las Cantigas de Alfonso el Sabio," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 7 (1885): 54–144, and "Treinta Leyendas por Gil de Zamora," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 13 (1888): 187–225.

10 All of the Old French prose versions were composed after *La Vie des pères*. See Jean le Conte's late fourteenth-century *Miracles de Nostre Dame: miracles de Nostre-Dame (fin XIV^e siècle), Edition critique, d'après le MS BNF fr: 1806*, ed. Pierre Kunstmann and Yen Duong (Ottawa: University of

des pères is an eclectic collection of thirteenth-century devotional literature featuring saints' lives, pious hermits and miracle tales, but its compilation has such a complex literary history that it has been divided into multiple sections. To be brief, although the first *Vie des pères* (ca. 1215–1230) included only 42 tales, the collection was expanded twice in the mid-thirteenth century, adding 32 additional tales to the collection. The Second *Vie des pères* (ca. 1241–1250) follows the model of the First, in that it is a compilation of mixed genres of devotional literature, but the Third *Vie des pères* (ca. 1252) consists primarily of miracle tales.¹¹ Due to the marked instability in the order and contents of *La Vie des pères*, the interpolation of ten miracle tales in an early fourteenth-century manuscript branch (ca. 1327–1328) might represent a final attempt to add to the collection. Indeed, the interpolation's consistent order, composition and placement within the manuscript branch suggests a Fourth *Vie des pères* that like the Third, is a compilation of Marian miracles.

As a miracle tale, *Chevalier* recounts a banal miracle in which the Virgin Mary spontaneously intervenes on behalf of her faithful to resolve the plot without a specific request for divine assistance. In addition to underscoring the textual and visual authority of the manuscript's *mise-en-page*, the miracle also deliberately conflates the boundaries of the sacred and the profane by presenting a conflict between the protagonist's secular pursuits and his religious devotion. In this tale, the knight's humble and sincere act of spiritual devotion requires divine intervention in order to fulfill his chivalric obligations. Indeed, the knight is so enraptured by the mass that he fails to report to the tournament field until the games are over, where he learns that he has won the tournament. The most unusual aspect of this

Ottawa, 1998) and Jean Miélot's *La Vie et miracles de Nostre Dame* (ca. 1456): *Miracles de Nostre Dame Collected by Jean Miélot, Secretary to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, Reproduced in facsimile from Douce manuscript 374 in the Bodleian Library for John Malcolm of Poltalloch with Text*, intro. with annotated analysis George F. Warner, ed. George F. Warner (Westminster: Nichols and Sons, 1885). For German variants, see *Gesamtabenteuer: hundert altdeutsche Erzählungen*, ed. Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen, 3 vols. (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1850, Repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961), vol. 3, no. 74; and *Marienlegenden*, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (Stuttgart: A. Krabbe, 1846), no. 4. For the Spanish version, see *Alfonso X, el Sabio: Cántigas de Santa Maria*, ed. Walter Mettman, 3 vols. (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1986–89), vol. 1, no. 63, 209–12. See also Morawski, "Mélanges de littérature pieuse" (see note 9), 199–200.

11 Edouard Schwan divided this work into the First, Second and Third *Vie des pères* at the turn of the twentieth century: "*La Vie des anciens pères*," *Romania* 13 (1884): 233–63. Lecoy dates the Second *Vie des pères* to ca. 1241–1250 and the Third *Vie des pères* to 1252, and remarks on the instability of the order and contents of the Second and Third *Vie des pères* in his introduction to the critical edition. *La Vie des pères* (see note 3), 1: xxiii. For additional discussion on the composition of *La Vie des pères*, see Adrian Tudor, "The One That Got Away: The Case of the Old French *Vie des pères*," *French Studies Bulletin* 55 (1995): 11–15.

tale is that the miracle is performed on behalf of a good Christian instead of a sinner, and that the Virgin's intervention is unsolicited rather than requested. Nonetheless, *Chevalier* conforms to the expectations of the miracle plot by portraying Mary as a powerful intercessor who intercedes on the behalf of her faithful, performing miracles for saints and sinners alike, regardless of their spiritual aptitude. The tale demonstrates the notion that miracles can be a reward for faith, love, and devotion, a humble illustration of God's grace, rather than a sensational illustration of God's mercy performed for sinners who find themselves in desperate situations and appeal to Mary, who obligingly provides a miraculous solution to their problem.¹²

Like its Latin precursors, *Chevalier* provides an example of an extraordinary miracle that is the direct result of ordinary piety. The prologue highlights the spiritual benefits of regular church attendance by comparing the faithful to tournament participants and presenting Jesus Christ as their leader:

Dous Jhesu, com cil bel guerroie,
Et comme noblement tournoie,
Qui volontiers au moustier tourne,
Ou leu le saint servise atourne
Et celebre le saint mistere
Du dous filz de la vierge mere. (fol. 123r; col. C)¹³

[Sweet Jesus is like one who nobly wages war and jousts in the tournament, [and] who willingly turns toward the church, in which the holy mass takes place and the holy mystery of the sweet son of the Virgin Mother is celebrated.]

¹² Clarissa Atkinson theorizes that Mary “did not expect heroism of her servants, or even good behavior, but she did demand faithfulness.” Clarissa Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 133, whereas Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski proposes that “miracles focused on those needing supernatural help and ... on sinners who receive succor because of their unquestioning devotion to the Virgin rather than because of any particular merit on their part.” Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, “Gautier de Coinci and Medieval Childbirth Miracles,” *Gautier de Coinci: Miracles, Music and Manuscripts*, ed. Kathy Krause and Allison Stones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 176–214; here 197–98.

¹³ “Chevalier,” *La Vie des pères* (see note 3); fols. 123r; col. C–123v, col. C. All references refer to MS k, since it is generally agreed that this was the first manuscript in the series; all translations are my own. For the dating of the manuscript branch, see Mary and Richard Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200–1500*, 2 vols. (London: Harvey Miller, 2001), 1: 198–200.

Immediately following the prologue, the poet introduces the protagonist as a pious knight who is especially devoted to the cult of Mary, so that the secular practice of chivalry conflicts with his contemplative, spiritual nature:

Uns chevaliers courtois et sages,
 Hardis et de grans vasselages –
 Nul mieudres en chevalerie –
 Moult amoit la Vierge Marie. (fol. 123r, col. C)

[(There was) a courtly and wise chevalier, daring and of great valor – no one was better at chivalry – who loved the Virgin Mary very much.]

This brief description of the protagonist suggests a secular literary context by introducing the notion of love and service to a lady prevalent in courtly romance, replacing earthly love with spiritual devotion to Mary in the miracle tale.¹⁴ Additional details about the knight reveal his economic and social background. Although he may be an exceptional knight, unlike the heroes of medieval romance, the protagonist is not independently wealthy, even if the vocation of knighthood implies a certain level of nobility and means.¹⁵ He is employed by an anonymous patron, who is identified only as a baron, and he is currently on his way to a tournament. Georges Duby proposes that the lesser nobility had few options for economic and social advancement during the early Middle Ages, and that they frequently became monks, court clerics, or landless knights who depended on the generosity of their lords to earn a living.¹⁶ In only a few lines, the narrative casts the protagonist as a marginal character who desires to overcome the limitations of his class by securing a patron to advance his chivalric career. The poem also reveals that he is part of a team of participants, a sociohistorical detail that reflects late-medieval tournament practice¹⁷:

¹⁴ Ironically, this common motif in secular romance is based on models of religious devotion, so that the ideology of courtly love is, in fact, grounded in Christian ideals. See Aldo Scaglione, *Knights at Court: Courtliness, Chivalry, & Courtesy from Ottonian German to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 93.

¹⁵ Michel Parisse, “Le tournoi en France, des origines à la fin du XIII^e siècle,” *Das ritterliche Turnier im Mittelalter: Beiträge zu einer vergleichenden Formen- und Verhaltensgeschichte des Rittertums*, ed. Josef Fleckstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 175–211; here 183, 207.

¹⁶ Georges Duby, *Guerrriers et paysans, VIIe-XIIe siècles: Premier essor de l'économie européenne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

¹⁷ David Crouch describes the tournament as “an aristocratic enthusiasm” that encouraged “a competitive team mentality.” David Crouch, *Tournament* (London: Hambledon and London,

Pour son barnage demener
 Et son franc cors d'armes pener,
 Aloit a son tournoiement
 Garnis de son contement. (fol. 123r; col. C)

[He was going to his tournament to fight in the assembly of barons and to exercise his noble body in feats of arms, in accordance with his nature.]

In addition to possessing an aptitude for chivalry, the knight has a full understanding of his feudal obligations, and he intends to be first on the tournament field (fol. 123r; col. C). Unfortunately, he becomes distracted by a nearby church that announces the beginning of the day's services, and goes there instead (fol. 123r; col. C). Once again, the poet demonstrates his knowledge of contemporary tournament practices, for by the early thirteenth century, it was typical for tournament participants to begin the day by hearing mass. In the context of the tournament, the spiritual benefit of churchgoing is an entirely practical one: it gave the knights an opportunity to put their souls in balance with God in the event that they should meet with a fatal accident on the field.¹⁸

However, when the eponymous knight remains in the church for a second mass, and then a third (fol. 123r; col. C–fol. 123v; col. A), the knight forgets his chivalric obligations to the baron, so that his churchgoing represents a conflict between his secular vocation and his spiritual aptitude. Although philosophical treatises on chivalry such as John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159) insist upon a complementary relationship between spiritual pursuits and the knightly ethos that integrates the social practice and political status of chivalry with medieval, Christian ideals, the chevalier's conundrum does not reflect medieval social realities.¹⁹ Instead, this knight recalls the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, in which the hero typically struggles to reconcile love and service to the lady (represented here by the baron) with knightly pursuits.²⁰

2005), 12, citing Henry II of England and his retinue, among others, as an example of tournament "teams" and their patronage in Chapter 2 (21–27).

18 Crouch, *Tournament* (see note 17), 71.

19 John of Salisbury discusses the symbiotic relationship between chivalry and Christianity in Book 6 of the *Policraticus*. *Johannis Saresberiensis episcopi Carnotensis Policratici sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri VIII*, ed. Clemens J. Webb, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909); John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990); here Book 6, Chapters 7–9, 114–18. All references refer to Nederman's translation. See also Jean Flori, "Le Chevalerie selon Jean de Salisbury," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 77 (1982): 35–77.

20 To cite one of the most prominent examples in Old French literature, Yvain abandons his wife to participate in tournaments with Gauvain when the latter claims that love has tarnished his rep-

When the knight's squire reproaches him, he deliberately presents his lord's desire to hear multiple masses as evidence of the internal conflict between desire and duty:

"Sire, pour la sainte char Dieu,"
Ce li a dit son escuier,
"Heure passe de tournoier
Et vous que demourez ici.
Venez vous en, vostre merci!²¹
Voulez vous devenir hermite,
Ou papelars ou [h]ypocrite?
Alons en a nostre mestier!" (fol. 123v, col. A)

[“Lord, by the holy body of God,” his squire said to him, “The hour of the tournament is passing [us by], but you linger here. Come away, please! Do you want to become a hermit, a cleric or a hypocrite? Let us be about our business!”]

The knight's reply clarifies his personal hierarchy of obligations by confirming that his personal desire for spiritual growth eclipses his secular duty to compete in the tournament:

"Amis," ce dist le chevalier,
"Cil tornoie moult noblement
Qui le saint servise entent.
Quant les messes seront trestoutes
Dites, s'en irons a nos routes –
Se Dieu plest ainz n'en partirai.
Et puis au Dieu plaisir irai
Tournoier viguerusement." (fol. 123v, col. A)

utation; Laudine rejects her husband when he fails to return to her on time, but Yvain wins her back after a series of anonymous exploits. Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion*, *Chrétien de Troyes: Romans*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994), 705–936; here ll. 2484–88. It should also be noted that despite Yvain's close association with the lion, an allegory of Christ in medieval bestiaries, Chrétien's subtle use of bestiary symbolism in this romance is secondary to conjugal love. For further information on the Christian allegory of the lion, see Guillaume le Clerc, *Le bestiaire divin de Guillaume le Clerc, clerc de Normandie, trouvère du XIIIe siècle*, ed. C. Hippeau (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), *Du lion*, ll. 158–210; Pierre de Beauvais, *Le bestiaire de Pierre de Beauvais (version courte)*, ed. Guy R. Mermier (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1977), *I: Du lyon*, 59–60; Gervaise, *Le Bestiaire de Gervaise*, ed. Paul Meyer, *Romania* 14 (1872): 420–43; here ll. 59–138; and Philippe de Thaün, *Le Bestiaire: Texte critique publié avec introduction, notes et glossaire*, ed. Emmanuel Walberg (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), ll. 157–228, 347–88. See also Jacques Voisenet, *Bêtes et hommes dans le monde médiéval: le bestiaire des clercs du Ve au XIIe siècle* (Turnout: Brepols, 2000).

21 "Je vous en pri" (MS d (see note 3), 147r, col. B).

["Friend," said the knight, "He who hears the holy mass fights most nobly in the tournament. When all the masses have been said, we will go on our way – but if it pleases God, then I will never leave. And then, if it pleases God, I will fight most vigorously in the tournament."]

Since the knight prioritizes his personal desires over his feudal obligations to the baron, the exchange juxtaposes spiritual and secular values, and it also highlights the disparity between feudal practice and literary interpretation of the knightly ethos. As an aristocratic pleasure, the tournament provided an opportunity for individual knights to prove their worth in mock combat and to acquire wealth and reputation.²² Similarly, the squire's critique of his lord reveals the extent to which he is devoted to secular pursuits and values. Tournaments also provided opportunities for squires to increase their social standing by claiming noble status, and by the mid-thirteenth century squires rode out with knights onto the field as bodyguards and joined the *mêlée* on foot after the charge.²³ Philippe Contamine notes that squires would joust amongst themselves, which was sometimes a question of class, but also a question of age, experience and equipment.²⁴ Given the social context of the tournament, the squire speaks on his own behalf, voicing his own desire for career and social advancement, when he reminds the knight that they will be late for the tournament, and he reinforces this notion when he encourages his lord to "be about *our* business" ("Alons en a *nostre* mestier," fol. 123v, col. A; my emphasis).

The protagonist's reply echoes the prologue when he replies that "Cil tornoie moult noblement / Qui le saint service entent" ("He who hears the holy mass fights most nobly in the tournament," fol. 123v, col. A). In the prologue, the poet compares Jesus to a tournament knight who "nobly wages war and jousts" ("com cil bel guer-roie, / Et noblement tournoie," fol. 123r, col. C), so that the simple act of devotion in repeatedly hearing the mass allows the knight to become more Christ-like. In fact, the knight is drawn into the church because he hears the signal for the service to begin:

Oï les sains que l'en sonnoit,
Par la sainte messe chanter.
Le chevalier sanz arrester
S'en est ale droit a l'eglise,

²² Parisse, "Le tournoi en France" (see note 15), 183, 177. See also Crouch, who maintains that knights could earn a handsome living participating in tournaments, as well as gain celebrity status. *Tournament* (see note 17), 12.

²³ Crouch, *Tournament* (see note 17), 48, 92.

²⁴ Philippe Contamine, "Le tournoi en France à la fin du moyen âge," *Das ritterliche Turnier im Mittelalter*, ed. Josef Fleckstein (see note 15), 425–49; here 430.

Pour escouter le saint servise.
 L'en chanta tantost hautement
 Une messe devotement
 De la sainte vierge Marie. (fol. 123r, col. C)

[He heard the church bells ring out to sing the holy mass. The knight went straight to the church to hear the holy mass, without stopping. Right away, he sang a mass of the Holy Virgin Mary, loudly and lovingly.]

Although this is an accurate description of how mass was conducted, the poet's allusion to the verb *enchanter* suggests a double-entendre that deliberately conflates the profane and sacred elements of this tale. In both romance literature and the *fabliaux*, the verb *enchanter* is frequently associated with seduction.²⁵ In secular literature, peerless knights cannot be swayed from their course of action.²⁶ Here, the knight may "en chanta" the mass as an expression of his devotion to Mary (fol. 123r, col. C), but his sudden change in behavior encourages the reader to interpret the church bells as a siren song that lures the faithful, so that the mass becomes a spiritual seduction that separates the knight from his feudal obligations. In contrast, when read in a hagiographical context, the squire's insistence that they report to the field introduces the trope of the temptation of the saint that the pious knight rightfully rejects because it impoverishes his soul.

Moreover, the knight's parenthetical addition of "I will never leave this place" ("ainz n'en partirai," fol. 123v, col. A) foreshadows the conclusion of the tale, in which the knight will abandon his earthly lord to serve God. The knight's language in this passage also evokes yet another genre of medieval literature, Occitan lyric poetry. In "Lo temps vai et ven e vire," Bernart de Ventadorn begins the seventh stanza by declaring "*ja nm partirai a ma vida*" ("never in my life shall I leave her," l. 43; my emphasis), so that the chevalier's pious devotion and service to his spiritual lady parallels the troubadour's love and service to a courtly lady.²⁷

25 To give one example, in *le Bel Inconnu*, Guinglain attributes his passivity to the *guivre's* seduction when he exclaims that "Li diables m'a encanté" (Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. Karen Fresco, trans. Colleen P. Donagher (New York: Garland, 1992), l. 3209), whereas in Rutebeuf's *Frère Denise*, a monk sets out to *enchanter* a young woman who dreams of becoming a saint (*Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux* (NRCF), ed. Willem Noomen, 10 vols. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993–98) 6: 1–24; here l. 36).

26 For example, Lancelot secures a leave of absence from prison to attend a tournament by vowing to return to his jailors in Chrétien de Troyes's *Le chevalier de la Charrette*. Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier de la Charrette, Chrétien de Troyes: romans*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994), 495–704; here ll. 5446–6058.

27 Carl Appel, *Bernart von Ventadorn, seine Lieder* (Halle a. d. S: Niemeyer, 1915), 181.

Indeed, the knight's personal hierarchy of obligations, which places spiritual contemplation over chivalric duty, is soon revealed to have been the correct choice. After the last mass has been said, the knight leaves the church and rides toward the tournament field, where his companions reveal that there have been no consequences for his failure to report to the games:

Et bien li dient c'onques mes
Nul chevalier n'emprist tel fes
D'armes com il ot fait ce jour. (fol. 123v, col. A)

[And they even said that never had any knight undertaken such feats of arms as he did that day.]

Not only has he won the tournament, he has taken many prisoners (fol. 123v, col. A). The surrendering knights constitute a source of wealth because they, their horses and their equipment would be either forfeited or ransomed.²⁸ While this outcome may seem surprising to the audience, the protagonist meets the other knight's congratulations with indifference:

Lors ne fu pas cil esbahis,
Car il a entendu tantost
Que cele fu pour lui en l'ost,
Pour qui il fu en la chapelle. (fol. 123v, col. A)

[But he was not astonished by this, because he immediately understood that She for whom he had gone into the chapel had acted for him in the host.]

He then freely admits his absence to the baron and the assembly of knights, giving all honor and glory to the Virgin:

“Car je vous dirai tel merveille
C'onques n'oïstes sa pareille.”
Lors leur conte tout mot a mot
Com les messes escoute ot,
Et qu'a ce tournoi point ne fu,
Ne ne feri de lance escu.
Mes bien pensoit que la pucelle
Qu'en a aoroit en la chapelle
Avoit pour lui fet ses cembraus.
“Moult est cist tournoiements biaux
Qu'elle a pour moi tournoie.” (fol. 123v, col. B)

28 Crouch, *Tournament* (see note 17), 96–98.

[“Now I will tell you of such a wonder that you have never heard its like.” Then he tells them word for word how he had listened to the masses, and wasn’t at all at the tournament, nor did he strike a shield with a lance, but he firmly believed that the Virgin to whom he prayed in the chapel had performed these deeds for him. “This is a very good tournament because she tourneyed for me!”]

Yet what is even more remarkable is that the knight had not requested divine assistance. The knight’s belief that the Virgin has spontaneously replaced him in the tournament has a precedent in *Sacristine*, in which a sacristan abandons her post to live with a lover; then returns after two years to find that no one has noticed her absence because Mary has performed her duties.²⁹ However, in this tale, the knight’s failure to fulfill his duty on the tournament field is not the result of sin, but of his steadfast devotion to the Virgin. Simply put, the knight values his eternal soul more than the temporary wealth and glory that he can win on the tournament field. Indeed, the poet approves of his choice by referring to the tournament field as “le leu/ou fere devoient lor geu” (“the place where the games would take place,” fol. 123v, col. A), and the use of the term “games” both minimizes the danger of fighting mock battles with real weapons and encourages the reader to equate the practice of chivalry with frivolous pursuits.³⁰ Indeed, the spectacle of the tournament implies lavish public displays of wealth and power, and John of Salisbury critiques the courtly ethos of grandeur as a symptom of moral decay precisely because it stands in opposition to the knight’s moral obligations to society.³¹

Nonetheless, one aspect of the narrative is tentative, in that the poet does not directly attribute the miracle to the Virgin Mary. When the knight hears that he has won the tournament, he realizes that she took his place on the field (“il a entendu tantost,” fol. 123v, col. A) and he firmly believes (“bien penssoit,” fol. 123v, col. B) that she has fought for him. Although the knight’s presence in the church prevents him from witnessing the miracle in person, the poet’s tentative linguistic choice suggests uncertainty because the Virgin’s acts are substantiated by rumor and assumption; here, the baron and the other knights are eyewitnesses to events that the beneficiary can only imagine.

The lack of certainty regarding the miracle shifts the poet’s verbal authority to the visual authority of the illuminator, in which the reader observes Mary enacting

29 “Sacristine,” *La Vie des pères* (see note 3), 1: 223–39.

30 Although injuries were more common, fatalities were always a possibility; one need only cite the 1559 death Henry II of France during a jousting incident.

31 John of Salisbury specifically censures the spoils of war as avarice and the sumptuous dress of courtiers as vanity and the cultivation of weakness. *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Nederman (see note 19), Book 6, Chapter 19, 122–25.

the miracle that is reported by the knight's colleagues and surmised to have happened in his personal account of the day's events. Although the intangible quality of faith is frequently described as an act of belief without the benefit of physical proof, in *Chevalier*, seeing is believing. The only exception is the Paris manuscript, illuminated by the Mauberge Master, which depicts a single-column miniature that shows the knight attending mass (MS d, fol. 147r, col. A) (fig. 1).



Fig. 1: *Chevalier*, La Vie des pères, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5204, fol. 147r (Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

As the final manuscript in the series, MS d's reception is complicated by the uncertain history of its ownership. Purchased in 1328 by Mahaut d'Artois, an influential member of the House of Burgundy with well-established royal ties, the Paris manuscript eventually made its way to the collegial church of the monastery of St. Quentin in Vermandois.³² Here, the presence of additional illuminations and rubrics within several texts creates a unique narrative effect in which the stories unfold

³² Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers* (see note 13), 196, 198.

visually as well as textually.³³ Considered in context, the miniatures of MS d enhance the act of reading as a contemplative expression of personal piety by punctuating the didactic aspects of the work with pauses for reflection and meditation.³⁴ The manuscript's restrained decoration is equally suggestive of the notion of reading as a personal act of devotion, provided that it was not intended to compensate for a substantial increase in the number of works compiled therein.³⁵

In contrast to MS d's single-column miniature, which minimizes the symbiotic relationship between text, image and reader, both the Brussels manuscript (MS i, fol. 122r, col. B–C) and The Hague manuscript (MS k, fol. 123r, col. B–C), illuminated by the Fauvel Master, include two-column illuminations that divide the narrative events into two panels (figs. 2–3): in the first panel, the reader sees the knight attending mass, as described in the narrative, but the second panel illustrates the Virgin's active role when she replaces him on the field, which is not articulated in the text.³⁶ The knight's contemplative posture suggests hagiographic literature since it highlights his aptitude for holiness, and it also conflicts with the prevailing notion of knights in secular romance, who are portrayed in continual motion as they participate in chivalric adventures, tournaments and wars. In contrast, the Virgin Mary's hyperactivity in the miniatures inverts her principal role in devotional literature, where her activities are often limited to appearing in saints' dreams and visions and she (or her icon) is most frequently the passive recipient of fervent prayers. When read together as an integrated whole, the images in the two panels conflate the sacred and profane elements of the written narrative,

33 Nine tales have been expanded with multiple illuminations and rubrics. *Haleine* features five separate miniatures and rubrics (fols. 109v, 110v, 111r, 112r, and 113r); three miniatures are awarded to both *Coq* (fols. 197r, 199r, and 199v) and *Sénéchal* (fols. 167v, 169r, and 169v); and two miniatures and rubrics accompany *Renieur* (fols. 104r and 104v), *Nièce* (fols. 118r and 119r), *Ivresse* (fols. 120r and 121r), *Crapaud* (fols. 127v and 128v), *Fou* (fols. 131r and 134v), *Abbesse Grosse* (fols. 134v bis and 135v) and *Inceste* (fols. 170v and 172r).

34 I am deeply grateful to conversations with Anna Russakoff regarding the possible uses of each manuscript.

35 The accumulation of *errata* implies that the Paris manuscript follows the Brussels manuscript, whereas the additional miniatures suggests collaboration between the compiler and the patron. The compendium removes two tales that appear in MSS k and i (*Enfant jureur* and *Image du diable*), repeats the *dédoublement* of four tales in MS i (*Ave Maria* (fols. 142v–143v and 183v–184r), *Miserere* (fols. 107v–108v and 153v–155r), *Jardinier* (fols. 108v–109v and 155r–156r) and *Feuille de Chou* (fols. 124r–124v and 170r–170v) and inserts a new work, *Les sept psaumes de penitence* (fols. 194v–196r), within the *Vie des pères* without acknowledging that it is, in fact, a separate devotional work.

36 Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers* (see note 13), 198–200. All three manuscripts were produced in the atelier of the *libraire* Thomas de Mauberge ca. 1327–1328. The principal scribe has been identified as Jean de Senlis, although the manuscripts occasionally demonstrate some clear changes of hand.

since the passivity of the kneeling knight contrasts with the frenetic activity of Mary at the tournament, thereby subverting the traditional roles of secular knight and holy saint.³⁷



Fig. 2: Chevalier, *La Vie des pères*, The Hague, KB 71 A 24, fol. 123r (© The Hague, KB)

Both MSS k and i depict the Virgin mounted on horseback, fully armed, with sword in hand, during the main event of the tournament, the *mêlée* (figs. 2–3). This event, in which the combatants were divided into two large teams to simulate a battle, was the most anticipated event of the late medieval tournament.³⁸ During the *mêlée*, when the herald gave the signal for the *estor*, the knights charged in extended lines to face the opponent directly opposite them. Those who did not fall in the initial *estor* turned and charged again, until such time as the mass of combatants broke up and the fighting continued in a less organized fashion.³⁹ Michel Parisse's description of early medieval tournaments suggests that the *mêlée* was a somewhat chaotic affair, with little effort to organize the combatants into formal ranks, so that the event strongly resembled a military exercise in which combatants relied

³⁷ Note that only MS d portrays the knight as standing (fol. 147r, col. A).

³⁸ Crouch, *Tournament* (see note 17), 72–76. Although the sequence of events varies, late medieval tournaments typically begin with individual combats, notably the joust, followed by the *mêlée*. Crouch notes that jousting became so popular after 1200 that some tournaments might devote an entire day to it (89).

³⁹ Crouch, *Tournament* (see note 17), 90–92.

on multiple strategies to win.⁴⁰ He also remarks that the lance had its role on the tournament field, but that it was quickly abandoned for the sword once the initial *estor* had ended: “L’épée est l’arme par excellence, la seule qui compte vraiment” (The sword is the weapon *par excellence*, the only one that truly counts).⁴¹ Mary demonstrates her effective use of this singular weapon as she defeats her opponents in both MSS k and i (MS k, fol. 123r, col. C and MS i, fol. 122r, col. C).

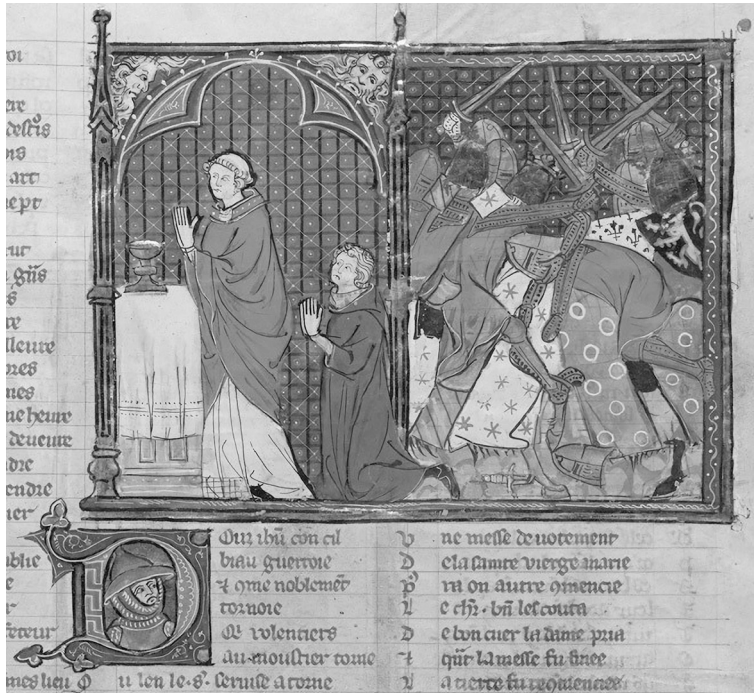


Fig. 3: *Chevalier*, *La Vie des pères*, Brussels, KBR 9229–30, fol. 122r (© Brussels, KBR)

Of the two manuscripts that depict Mary on the field, The Hague manuscript identifies her quite clearly because she is the only knight shown without a helmet (fig. 2). Although there are seven figures in the panel, the illuminator attracts the reader’s attention by highlighting the Virgin’s unprotected head and face. The artist also adds a golden crown and a plain blue halo (MS k, fol. 123r, col. C), which make her unmistakable against the solid background of the panel.

40 Parisse, “Le tournoi en France” (see note 15), 188, 196.

41 Parisse, “Le tournoi en France” (see note 15), 178.

The depiction of Mary in the Brussels manuscript is more subtle (fig. 3). As in MS k, the Virgin is easily identified in the foreground, but in this panel, she is one of three knights who wear black helmets, while three other knights wear blue helmets and three more sport beige or uncolored helmets, so that there is a total of nine figures in the panel. Both manuscripts employ a variety of colors for the knight's helmets and equipment, but MS i's dark blue, textured background hinders the identification of individual knights, so that it better reflects the chaos of the *mêlée*. In fact, although the Brussels manuscript adds only two figures, Mary is indistinguishable from the other knights and is only recognizable because she wears a golden crown on top of her helmet (MS i, fol. 122r, col. C).

In addition to deepening the contrast between the devout knight and the militant Mary, the reader's privileged knowledge, by virtue of the miniatures that precede the text, closes the narrative gap between the protagonist's conjecture about what took place during the tournament and his companions' eyewitness testimony, so that the images clarify and confirm events omitted from the narrative. In MSS k and i, the paratext does not function as a verbal and visual gloss on the narrative that influences the reader's reception of the text, but as an intratextual cue that forms part of the narrative itself, due to its visual recreation of events that remain hidden from both protagonist and reader. Rather than pre-interpreting the *exemplum* for the reader, the miniatures in *Chevalier* not only highlight the hidden, principal event of the missed tournament and emphasize the spiritual lesson (and earthly rewards) of humble service to God, but they also confirm the veracity of the miracle by unequivocally depicting the Virgin Mary wheeling on the tournament field. The protagonist may only "penssoit" that a miracle has taken place (fol. 123v, col. B), but like the knights who witness the event firsthand, the reader has proof of divine intervention in the illuminations.

Despite the similarities between the two-paneled miniatures that reveal the miracle of *Chevalier*, MSS k and i have different histories that suggest different purposes and uses. MS k is a royal manuscript that entered the collection of Charles IV in 1327.⁴² Like the Paris manuscript, MS k is executed in a minimalist style, with modest images that lack the gold leaf associated with most royal manuscripts, thereby suggesting the use of this compendium of moralizing literature for private, personal devotion. In stark contrast to the images of MSS d and k, the Brussels manuscript contains a large quantity of gold leaf, elaborate miniatures with prominent architectural features, and extensive marginalia. In fact, the lavish style of MS i's miniatures and marginalia provide a counterpoint to its frequent scribal er-

42 Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers* (see note 13), 194.

rors and irregular compilation.⁴³ Rouse and Rouse propose that Jeanne de Flandres, Charles IV's cousin, commissioned this manuscript as a foundation gift to the Carthusian Charterhouse of Zellem, which she founded with her husband in 1328.⁴⁴ The manuscript's detailed images and ornate decoration reflect the gravitas of the initial donation, as well as its continued ceremonial use on feast days and other occasions when the monastery would display its material and spiritual wealth to the community and its patrons. Yet despite its status as an objet d'art that might have been considered too precious for use in daily meditation (or perhaps because of it), the miniatures of the Brussels manuscript inspire reflection and contemplation that is consistent with the edifying intent of *La Vie des pères*.

After he tells his story, the plot resolves the conflict between secular duty and spiritual desire by reaffirming the notion that temporal passions are trivial when compared with eternal salvation. When the knight concludes that the miracle would be pointless if he did not return Mary's favor, even though she had acted independently to secure his victory and he was under no obligation to return it, he nonetheless evokes the *contemptus mundi* motif that is a hagiographical commonplace:

"Fox seroie se retournoie
A la mondaine vanite.
A Dieu promet en verite
Que ja mes ne tournoierai,
Fors devant le juge vrai,⁴⁵

⁴³ Like MSS k and d, the Brussels manuscript contains two variants of *Image du diable* (fols. 101r–102v and 184v–185v) and *Ave Maria* (fols. 117v–118v and 166r–166v), but the addition of *Feuille de Chou* (fols. 146v–147) may reflect the literary tastes of a new patron, particularly as the compiler retains the exact order and placement of tales within The Hague manuscript. However, the Brussels manuscript also demonstrates a marked degree of textual variation in its compilation. In addition to adding *Feuille de Chou*, MS i adds redundant variants of *Miserere* (fols. 81v–83r and 129v–130v) and *Jardinier* (fols. 83r–84v and 130v–131v), both of which are copied first without the prologue, then with prologue, which represents an unsuccessful attempt to correct MS k, where the scribe truncates both tales. Other anomalies include prologue omissions (e.g., *Ange et ermite*, fol. 185v), unnumbered tales (e.g., *Ame en gage*, fol. 164r), and blank columns in the initial table of contents that could indicate additional works had been planned for the manuscript (fols. 1v, col. A–B; 3r, col. B–C; 3v). The sheer number of *errata* gives the overall impression of a rapid production process.

⁴⁴ Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers* (see note 13), 195.

⁴⁵ Although the orthography suggests the future tense of the verb *veoir* ("to see"), and the first line of this couplet terminates with the verb *tournoier*, so that both lines of the couplet would terminate with the same part of speech, thereby following the grammatical symmetry that is typical of the structure of narrative verse, the cultural context of the Final Judgement favors this word's interpretation as the adjective *voir* ("true"). Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue fran-*

Qui connoist le bon chevalier
Et selonc le fet set jugier.” (fol. 123v, col. B–C)

[“It would be foolish to return to worldly vanity. Promising God in truth, I will never again fight in a tournament, except [when I stand] before the true judge, who recognizes a good knight, and knows to judge him by his actions.”]

As in traditional hagiography, the knight rejects wealth and fame, trading his secular vocation for a spiritual one. In fact, since Aldo Scaglione argues that the ritual of the granting of knighthood signified “a set of mental attitudes which related to the practical functions of knighthood,” the poet subverts the secular custom of passing an all-night vigil in church prior to the dubbing ceremony, replacing it with the chevalier’s all-day vigil in church prior to his retirement from the baron’s service and his assumption of a new social role.⁴⁶ The poet’s epilogue recalls the prologue, emphasizing the virtue of regular church attendance:

Par cest exemple bien veons
Que li dous Deux, en qui creons,
Ainme et chierist et honneure
Celui qui volentiers demeure
Pour oïr messe en sainte eglise,
Et qui volentiers fet servise
A la tres douce chiere mere.
Profitable en est la maniere
Et cil qui est courtois et sage
Maintient volentiers son visage. (fol. 123v, col. C)

[By this example, we clearly see that the good Lord, in whom we believe, loves and cherishes and honors he who gladly stays to hear the mass in holy church, and he who willingly serves the very dear, sweet Mother. And [for] he who is courtly and wise [and] keeps his face [toward her], this is a profitable custom.]

Here, the poet’s use of *profitable* may be read as another double-entendre, since the knight receives both spiritual edification for the benefit of his soul and worldly wealth and glory when the Virgin Mary takes prisoners on his behalf and wins the tournament in his name. Moreover, the epilogue does not underscore the knight’s decision to take orders, which is a typical hagiographic response when miracles are performed on the protagonist’s behalf, but rather, the knight’s humble act of devotion in hearing the mass. The narrative coda that precedes the epilogue states

çaise et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle, 10 vols. (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1880–95) s.v. *veoir* and *voir*; here 8: 183, 284.

⁴⁶ Scaglione, *Knights at Court* (see note 14), 18.

only that the knight sets out for a monastery over the tearful objections of his companions, where he devotes himself entirely to Mary (fol. 123v, col. C). Unlike traditional hagiography, there is no mention of his later entering the ranks of the *sancti milites*, nor does the tale include subsequent acts of extreme piety that signify exceptional holiness, such as additional miracles or mortification of the flesh.⁴⁷ Instead, the poet exhorts the audience to serve God in moderation by attending church, and the miracle serves as evidence that ordinary gestures of faith and devotion, acts that define basic Christian behavior, might be generously rewarded in times of need. Indeed, Elisabeth Pinto-Mathieu posits that *La Vie des pères* was composed for a lay audience, so that its *exempla* propose models of moderation rather than those of inimitable Christian virtue.⁴⁸ Thus, the same grace and mercy that Mary extends to murderers and apostates is also dispensed to faithful Christians by virtue of their devotion to her.

The knight in *Chevalier* commits no scandalous misdeeds. He is an ordinary man who, as his squire suggests, practices the wrong occupation (fol. 123v, col. A). He is introduced as “uns chevaliers cortois et sages” and is also described as “hardis” and “nul mieudres en chevalerie” (fol. 123r, col. C). His character is thus exemplary, but hardly exceptional, except perhaps as a tournament combatant. Although derelict in his present duty, his lord does not even reproach him for having missed the tournament, and his companions grieve when he parts from them (“Lors prent congie piteusement / Maint enmploroient tendrement”), (“Then he took leave from them piteously [and] many wept tenderly,” fol. 123v, col. C). In fact, his faithfulness to God in attending multiple masses and rejecting his performance on the tournament field is his most remarkable quality. And while MSS d and k insist on the knight’s piety by portraying him at mass in MS d’s single-column miniature (fol. 147r, col. A) and the first panel of MS k (fol. 122r, col. B), in the first panel of MS i (fol. 122r, col. B–C), the architecture of the church depicts the heavenly host attentively observing this humble act of devotion that ultimately merits divine intervention (figs. 1–3).⁴⁹

47 In his brief discussion of military orders, Scaglione cites Saints George, Eustache, and Guillaume d’Aquitaine (Guillaume d’Orange), among others (*Knights at Court* (see note 14), 71). However, by the time of *Chevalier*’s composition ca. 1327–1328, the cultural ideal of the knight who fights for God had waned due to the failure of the Crusades.

48 Elisabeth Pinto-Mathieu, “Le conte du ‘Jardinier’ de la *Vie des pères* ou comment prêcher aux laïcs?,” *Le tonnerre des exemples: Exempla et médiation culturelle dans l’Occident médiéval*, ed. Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu, Pascal Collomb, and Jacques Berlioz (Rennes: Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2010), 113–30; here 118.

49 Another charming detail in this variant of *Chevalier* is the knight in the historiated letter (fol. 122r, col. B) (Fig. 4). When taken together with the panel of the knight in the church, the his-



Fig. 4: Chevalier, historiated letter, *La Vie des pères*, Brussels, KBR 9229–30, fol. 122r (© Brussels, KBR)

Thus, the poet's tentative account of events, narrated by an absent protagonist who does not witness Mary's miracle, requires the visual authority of the Fauvel master in order to remove any doubt that a miracle has taken place, so that rather than enriching or even manipulating reader reception, the miniatures of this tale play a critical role in constructing the narrative. Without detracting from their typical function of highlighting narrative events or inspiring contemplative meditation, the effectiveness of this miracle tale as either a tool for didactic instruction or as a purely aesthetic form of entertainment relies not on its conflation of the sacred and profane elements of the text, but on the ability of the audience to correctly interpret the narrative and its spiritual truth. *Chevalier's* miniatures are an integral, albeit visual element of the narrative, without which it would be impossible

toriated letter projects two images that visually encapsulate the protagonist's internal conflict between personal desire and feudal duty.

to fully understand the edifying lesson of the verbal text, which emphasizes the extraordinary, (in)tangible rewards of humble service and sincere devotion as ordinary acts of piety that merit extraordinary intervention, even when it is unsolicited.

Serena Franzon

Aspects of Italian and Flemish Identity in Relation to Book Illumination: Reception of Devotional and Antiquarian Ideas through Depictions of Jewelry

Abstract: This article focuses on depictions of jewelry in Flemish and Italian manuscripts on the borders of illuminated books, a decorative motif that was widespread in both Flemish and Italian illuminations throughout the second half of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century. Borders, text, and images could be seen as interacting, and representations of similar jewels in different contexts, secular or sacred, could convey different meanings. Franzon highlights the way these depictions influenced the self-construction of Flemish Christians and how this motif lost its religious value in Italy, becoming instead a symbol of Renaissance antiquarian identity.

Keywords: Flemish illuminated books; Italian illuminated books; jewelry; mnemonic devices; self-identity; Mary of Burgundy; Borso d'Este; Girolamo da Cremona; cameos collections

During the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, depictions of jewelry became widespread in Flemish and Italian manuscripts. However, there are significant differences between Flemish and Italian illumination. This article will explore these differences, investigating both cultural contexts. In addition, it will analyze the connection between personal identity and the consumption of objects of art, discussing how the book owners fashioned their identity by the means of luxury objects represented in books. Representations of profane objects that served a religious purpose will be discussed, as well as devotional jewelry depicted as symbols of power and social status.

Depictions of jewelry interplayed with texts and other images convey symbolic messages. These artistic representations influenced the circulation and reception of specific devotional practices, and of the antiquarian fashion. This essay aims to reframe bejeweled friezes in book illumination, in order to demonstrate that these depictions were not merely decorative. Representations of jewelry were part of a complex and meaningful artistic phenomenon. They could be deeply understood only in considering both the interaction between text and images and actual and depicted pieces of jewelry. As it will be discussed further on, precious

body ornaments, even when represented with pictorial media, were means of communication.

The analysis of representations of jewelry in book illumination helps in shedding new light on different aspects of early modern life: devotional practices, memory, self-perception, and social values. In this exception, jewelry depictions were visual aids that deeply influenced the human experience, both in private places of worship, and in the social context. These representations of precious objects were involved in the dialectics between the sacred and the profane, the social context and the personal identity, the international exchanges and the local habits.

Italian and Northern Renaissance in Their Cultural Framework

Books featuring jewelry depictions are material evidence of a context of continuous cultural exchanges between Italy and Flanders. During the period analyzed in this article, the Italian peninsula was divided into several small states. Renaissance Italy was in fact a fragmentary reality, in which Italian cities acted as fulcrum of political, economic, and cultural dissemination, such as in the famous cases of Milan, Florence and Venice. Every Italian city-state had its own commercial system, with merchants traveling all over the known world.

During the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the Flanders were part of the existing Duchy of Burgundy, which represented one of the most important trade places for Italian merchants. Many important Italian families, such as the Florentine Medici, employed Italian merchants in trading luxury goods and implementing financial activities in the Flanders. Flourishing Flemish towns, such as Ghent and Bruges teemed with Italian merchants.¹

During the early modern Era, Italy and Flanders were wealthy countries, in which jewelry pieces were highly requested luxury items. Trade accounts and inventories of Italian merchants report both Italian jewels sold in the Flanders, and

1 Peter Stabel, "Venezia e i Paesi Bassi: contatti commerciali e stimoli intellettuali," *Il Rinascimento a Venezia e la pittura del Nord ai tempi di Bellini, Dürer, Tiziano*. Exhibition catalogue (Venice, September 5, 1999–January 9, 2000) ed. Bernard Aikema and Beverly L. Brown (Milan: Bompiani, 1999), 53–65; Federica Veratelli, "I tratti del potere: I clienti italiani di Hans Memling," *Memling: Rinascimento fiammingo*. Exhibition catalogue (Rome, October 11, 2014–January 18, 2015), ed. Till H. Borchert (Milan: Skira, 2014), 53–65; Giovanni Foscari, *Viaggi di Fiandra 1463–1464 e 1467–1468*, ed. Stefania Montemezzo (Venice: La Malcontenta, 2012).

Flemish pieces of jewelry that were shipped to Italian states.² Goldsmiths themselves traveled in both countries. Archival documents mention both Italian goldsmiths who lived and worked in Flanders, and Flemish goldsmiths and jewelers settled in Italy.³ This context of strong commercial relations gave impetus to a tight dialogue between Italian and Flemish artists, involving both technical features, and iconographic themes.⁴ This phenomenon has been studied with a particular regard to Flemish and Italian paintings; since it had a strong relevance in book illumination too, an overview on it will be given in the following lines.

The so-called Flemish school of painting refers to a group of Flemish artists active from fifteenth century to seventeenth century who developed a distinctive type of oil pictorial medium, and are characterized by a meticulous attention to small details.⁵ Flemish oil paint perfectly served the purpose of representing the visual quality of different materials. Shimmering gems and metals were consequently depicted in a very realistic way; pieces of jewelry were often included in Flemish artworks, painted with their exact reflective qualities.⁶

These representations of jewelry seem to have had a symbolic meaning. During the Middle Ages, jewels were widely considered as a physical manifestation of God.⁷ Marta Rossetti argued that the conspicuous presence of gemstones and pieces of jewelry in Flemish paintings could be explained by the will of representing God's presence on Earth.⁸

What is certain is that depictions of jewelry became distinctive elements of Flemish style of painting, encountering the taste of international commissioners.

2 Foscari, *Viaggi di Fiandra* (see note 1). Federica Veratelli, *A la mode italienne: commerce du luxe et diplomatie dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux, 1477-1530: édition critique de documents de la Chambre des comptes de Lille* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2013).

3 Serena Franzon, "Il fermaglio con l'angelo nel Quattrocento: ricerche e confronti tra pittura e scultura," *OADI Rivista dell'Osservatorio per le Arti Decorative in Italia* 9 (2014): 15-28; here notes 15-17; Marta Rossetti, "Gemme e metalli nobili nella pittura fiamminga del Quattrocento," *Ori nell'Arte. Per una storia del potere segreto delle gemme*, ed. Stefania Macioce (Rome: Logart Press, 2007), 40-65.

4 Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts across Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Veratelli, *A la mode italienne* (see note 2).

5 Caterina Limentani Virdis, *Il quadro e il suo doppio: Effetti di specularità narrativa nella pittura fiamminga e olandese* (Modena: S.T.E.M., 1981).

6 Marc De Mey, "Jan van Eyck and the Representation of Glow," *Culture figurative a confronto tra Fiandre e Italia dal XV al XVII secolo, Nord/Sud. Ricerche fiamminghe al di qua delle Alpi. Prospettive di studio e indagini tecniche*, ed. Anna De Floriani and Maria C. Galassi (Milan: Silvana, 2008), 19-30.

7 *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson and Lloyd de Beer (London: British Museum, 2014).

8 Rossetti, "Gemme e metalli nobili" (see note 3).

These representations of metals and gemstones are in fact part of a renewed interest in light effects in relation to precious materials. The rise of this oil painting chronologically coincides with crucial innovations in gemstone cutting. During the Middle Ages, the common form of gems was the *cabochon*, namely a stone polished on its upper surface. In Europe, gemstones were being cut with facets since the last fourteenth century, but it was only from the fifteenth century that cut gemstones became widespread among European elites.⁹ Gem cutting highly increased the luminosity of gems, and this fact might have stimulated the will of representing shiny jewelry via pictorial media.

Flemish oil painting dramatically changed the way in which jewels were represented, replacing with extremely illusionistic effects such as the traditional Medieval gold foil and *pastiglia*. The word *pastiglia* indicates a low relief decoration applied to build up a surface that may be gilded with gold foil. This “paste work” was used to create three-dimensional effects in representing jewelry, but restricted the possibility of representing minute details. This fact is made evident in comparing jewelry pieces in Petrus Christus’s *Saint Eligius* with crowns and clasps in the *Adoration of the Magi* by Gentile da Fabriano (figs. 1–2). Therefore, the ability of Flemish painters in representing cut gemstones easily encountered the praise of wealthy commissioners. Flemish paintings were highly praised by Italian people, who became important acquirers of these objects of art.¹⁰ Many Italian merchants and noblemen ordered their family portraits and religious paintings to famous Flemish artists.¹¹

Ciriaco d’Ancona, an Italian humanist who had a special influence on the intellectual context of Italian early Renaissance, in describing a *Deposition* by Rogier van der Weyden, wrote: “auro Auri simile, margaritas gemmas, et coetera omnia non artificio manu hominis Quin ab ipsa omniparente natura inibi genita diceres”.¹² Ciriaco’s description highlighted enthusiastically the illusionistic effects

9 Fritz Falk, “The Cutting and Setting of Gems in the 15th and 16th Centuries,” *Princely Magnificence: Court Jewels of the Renaissance, 1500–1630*. Exhibition catalog (London, October 15, 1980–February 1, 1981) ed. Jill Hollis (London: Debrett’s, 1980), 20–26. The point cut follows the natural octahedral shape of diamonds, the ‘table cut’ is a point cut with the upper part grounded off.

10 Paula Nuttal, *From Flanders to Florence: The Impact of Netherlandish Painting, 1400–1500* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); *Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400–1600)*, ed. Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

11 Nuttal, *From Flanders to Florence* (see note 10).

12 Francis Ames-Lewis, “Sources and Documents for the Use of the Oil Medium in Fifteenth-Century Italian Painting,” *Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400–1600)*, ed. Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 47–62. The quotation can be found in: http://www.bigakukai.jp/aesthetics_online/aesthetics_18/text18/text18_komatsubaraaya.pdf, note 17 (last accessed on Feb. 3, 2023).

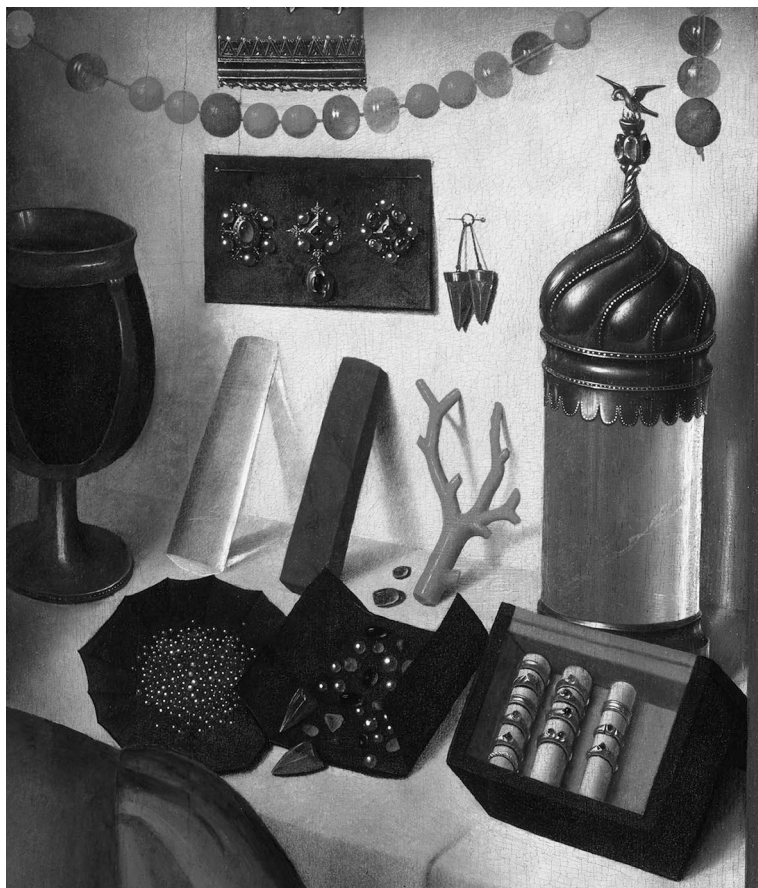


Fig. 1: Petrus Christus, *Saint Eligius (A goldsmith in his shop)*, 1449, New York, Metropolitan Museum (©Metropolitan Museum, public domain), detail

in van der Weyden's jewelry depictions, giving an idea of how Flemish paintings were perceived in the Italian Renaissance.

Starting from the seventh decade of the fifteenth century, Italian artists began to represent jewels in their smallest details. Many Italian artists, such as the famous Antonello da Messina, used oil painting to represent shimmering gems and metals; others, even using the traditional *tempera* painting, became more in-



Fig. 2: Gentile da Fabriano, *The Adoration of the magi*, 1423, Gallerie degli Uffizi (© Creative commons license), detail

terested in representing small details of jewelry.¹³ Italian artists and treatise writers, such as Leon Battista Alberti and Filarete, suggested to abandon the traditional use of gilded *pastiglia* in paintings, preferring illusionistic reproduction of metals via pictorial media.¹⁴ Several studies described this tendency as part of a broad influence of Flemish culture on the Italian artistic context, highlighting the importance given to the representation of glow.¹⁵ The artistic phenomenon of representations of jewels in Flemish and Italian books arose in this cultural background, with its first expressions from the fifth decade of the fifteenth century. Book illumination seems to have been strongly influenced by the increasing interest toward

¹³ De Mey, “Jan van Eyck and the Representation” (see note 6). Tempera is a permanent painting medium consisting in colored pigments mixed with egg yolk or other water-soluble binder.

¹⁴ Paula Nuttal, *Pittura degli antichi Paesi Bassi a Firenze: commentatori, committenti e influsso, Firenze e gli antichi Paesi Bassi. 1430–1530, dialoghi tra artisti, da Jan Van Eyck a Ghirlandaio, da Memling a Raffaello*. Exhibition catalog (Florence, June–October 26, 2008) ed. Bert W. Meijer (Livorno: Sillabe, 2008), 22–37, particularly 31; Ames-Lewis, “Sources and Documents” (see note 12), 54.

¹⁵ See bibliography in notes 4–6 and 10–14.

jewelry representations, because this kind of decorative motif was never circulated before.¹⁶

Tempera painting was the preferred medium for parchment supports; thus, compared to oil paintings, illuminations are characterized by more opaque rendering of jewels. If we compare the three shimmering pins depicted in Petrus Christus's *Saint Eligius* with the pieces of jewelry featured in the *London Rothschild Hours*, this difference is remarkably evident (figs. 1, 3). Nevertheless, depiction of jewelry had become a highly fashionable iconography both in Italian and in Flemish books; this fact could be explained in relation to symbolic meanings that will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Case of Flemish Devotional Manuscripts: The Role of Depicted Jewelry in Religious Practices

Paintings usually represent jewelry pieces in their context of use, namely worn on the body. Conversely, book illuminations feature jewelry extrapolated from the usual context, and painted as if they were leaning directly on the page. This fact gives visual evidence to jewels, that could easily be included in illuminated borders that encircle narrative scenes or written pages.

Representations of jewelry pieces in book illuminations probably first featured in Flemish books of hours, namely books intended for domestic devotion. Previous studies suggested that illuminators benefitted from a climate of interference between different artistic techniques, which encouraged the copying of actual pieces of jewelry.¹⁷ Gem-studded clasps and precious bookmarks were placed in close contact with the pages, providing a precious inspiration for book illuminators. Pilgrimage badges, small objects purchased by pilgrims near the sacred places, were often pinned or sewed onto pages; these badges could have been an inspiration for illuminators too.¹⁸ Indeed, several Flemish books of hours fea-

¹⁶ Books produced in previous periods just featured occasional occurrences of representations of jewelry. See, for example, Charles C. Oman, "The Jewels of Saint Albans Abbey," *The Burlington Magazine* 71 (1930): 80–82.

¹⁷ Serena Franzon, "Il gusto per l'oreficeria dipinta nella decorazione libraria di XV e XVI secolo: Affinità e differenze tra miniature italiane e di area fiamminga," *Rivista di Storia della Miniatura* 21 (2017): 139–48; Nicolas Herman, "Excavating the Page: Virtuosity and Illusionism in Italian Book Illumination, 1460–1520," *Word & Image* 27.2 (2011): 190–211.

¹⁸ Megan H. Foster Campbell, "Pilgrimage through the Pages: Pilgrims Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts," *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, ed. Sarah Blick and Laura D. Gelfand, 2 vols. (Leiden and



Fig. 3: Annunciation to the shepherds, Rothschild Hours, ca. 1500, London, British Library, Add 35313, fol. 95v (© London, British Library)

ture illusionistic representations of pilgrim badges, stunningly similar to actual badges (fig. 4).

Depictions of pilgrim badges and jewelry appeared in Flemish manuscripts in the second half of the fifteenth century. Kate Challis listed 37 Flemish books of

Boston: Brill, 2011), 1: 227–74; Hanneke van Asperen, “The Book as Shrine, the Badge as Bookmark: Religious Badges and Pilgrims’ Souvenirs in Devotional Manuscripts,” *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, ed. Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 288–312.

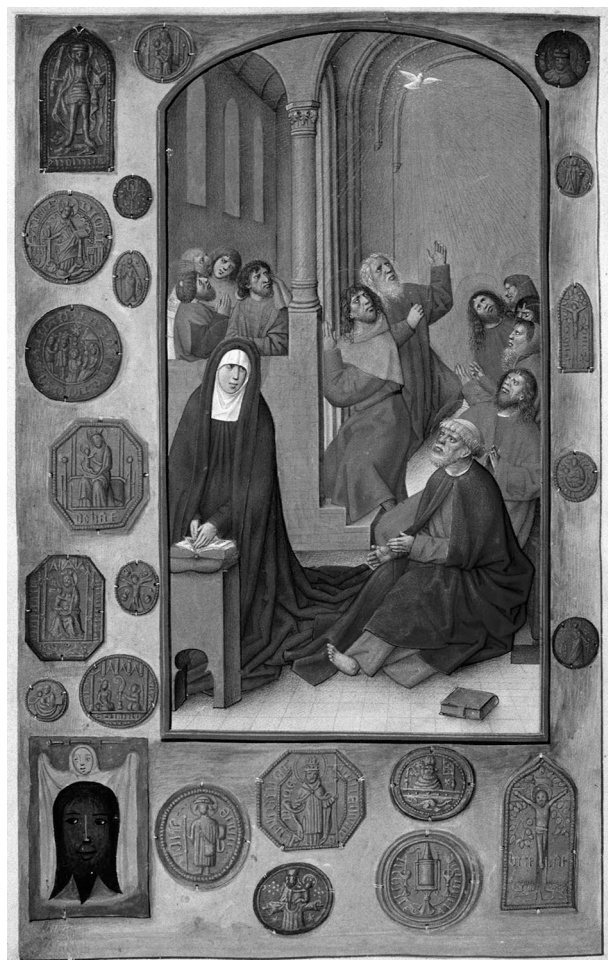


Fig. 4: Master of the Maximilian Hours, Pentecost, Book of Hours, post 1488, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 311, fol. 21v (© Oxford, Bodleian Library)

hours with depictions of jewelry in the margins, framing the artistic phenomenon and distinguishing between different decorative typologies.¹⁹ All the books identified by Challis can be ascribed to a short period, between 1470 and 1520, except for

¹⁹ Kate Challis, "Marginalized Jewels: The Depiction of Jewelry in the Borders of Flemish Devotional Manuscripts," *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir. Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 254–69.

the *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, that could be considered the first book featuring this type of decoration (ca. 1440).²⁰

Flemish books of hours usually contain several full-page miniatures, that were characterized by a central narrative scene surrounded by borders featuring illusionistic representations of flowers, birds, fruits and jewels. According to Mary Carruthers, such illuminated borders could be used by the readers as mnemonic devices.²¹ Carruthers reported several examples from different contexts in which text and images were intended to create mental images and memorial connections, by using a modern version of the ancient Roman technique of *loci*. This method uses visualizations of familiar spatial environments, which is composed by several *loci* (namely placements). When desiring to remember a set of items or concepts, the subject mentally walks through these *loci*, and commits an item to each *locus*, memorizing every visual aspect of it. Retrieval of concepts is achieved by ‘walking’ again through the *loci*, following a predetermined path. During the Middle Ages and the early modern era, the sense of sight was considered as a privileged channel for memory. Memory was called “the inner sight,” and, as previous studies tend to confirm, was visually stimulated through objects of art.²² Representations of jewelry in Flemish manuscripts were probably involved in such a visual version of the *loci* technique. The analysis of Flemish illuminations and the context in which they were produced suggests that these depictions were used to stimulate meditation; as it will be discussed in the following lines, they may serve as mnemonic aids during the domestic prayer, helping the memorization of religious formulas.²³

First, devotional jewels, namely jewels featuring religious symbolism, frequently appeared in Flemish books of hours. Jeweled cross pendants, prayer strings such as rosaries, and cameos representing saints or sacred scenes are the most common examples.²⁴ Although several non-devotional jewels appeared

20 *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves: Devotion, Demons, and Daily Life in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Rob Dücker and Ruud Priem (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2009).

21 Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

22 Elina Gertsman, *Worlds Within: Opening the Medieval Shrine Madonna* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

23 Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann and Virginia Roehrig Kaufmann, “The Sanctification of Nature: Observations on the Origins of *Trompe l’Oeil* in Netherlandish Book Painting of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 19 (1991): 43–64; Franzon, “Il gusto per l’oreficeria dipinta” (see note 17), 139–48.

24 See, for examples, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, AF A, f. 15r, 28. <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/bpun/A0028/15r> (last accessed on May 20, 2023). See also the following illuminations: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 220, *Book of Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, f. 40r;

too, religious precious items might have acted as a reminder of the devotional intention of these books. For example, a lavish cross pendant with pearls and green gems, possibly emeralds, could be seen in an illuminated page in the *London-Rothschild Hours*, together with three flower-shaped pins (fig. 3).

Furthermore, some aspects of illuminated borders could be better understood by analyzing the specific features of Flemish religious context. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, *Devotio Moderna*, or Modern Devotion, became the predominant religious tendency in Flanders. *Devotio Moderna* was a Christian movement for religious reform that had a strong impact on art objects.²⁵ In accordance with Modern Devotion precepts, religious images should be used to stimulate meditation and self-identification in biblical episodes and life of the saints. Geert Grote (1340–1384), founder of this religious renewed movement, believed that images were necessary, in conjunction with texts, to effectively stimulate prayer. Every element in Flemish books of hours seems to be represented accordingly with this assumption. For example, the mnemonic role of depictions of pilgrimage souvenirs is evident. Previous studies on pilgrimage souvenirs attested that these *devotionalia* played a huge role in Christian domestic worship, by stimulating memories from the pilgrimage. These small objects were easily recognizable by their standardized iconographic features; as a consequence, they were used to recall specific shrines in the memory of their owners. According to Megan Foster Campbell, depicted souvenirs were also used to accomplish an imaginary pilgrimage, even by people who never had the opportunity to physically take the voyage.²⁶

Depictions of pieces of jewelry possibly served a similar purpose. This hypothesis is reinforced by the absence of depictions of jewelry in profane Flemish books: this fact implies a devotional aim of precious objects represented in books.²⁷ In addition, several jewelry depictions are accompanied by biblical verses or short prayers included in illuminated borders.²⁸ This is the case, for example, of the already

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 311, *Book of Hours*, f 29v. Other examples could be seen in Challis, “Marginalized Jewels” (see note 19), 254–69.

25 Rudolphus van Dijk, “Toward Imageless Contemplation: Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen as Guide for *Lectio Divina*,” *Spirituality Renewed: Studies on Significant Representatives of the Modern Devotion*, ed. Hein Blommestijn, Charls Caspers, and Rijcklof Hofman (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 3–28; Kees Waijman, “Image and Imageless: A Challenge to [the Modern] Devotio,” *Spirituality Renewed: Studies on Significant Representatives of the Modern Devotion*, ed. Hein Blommestijn, Charls Caspers, and Rijcklof Hofman (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 29–40.

26 Foster Campbell, “Pilgrimage through the Pages” (see note 18), 227–74.

27 John H. Marrow, *Pictorial Invention in Netherlandish Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages: The Play of Illusion and Meaning* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005).

28 See Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W 437, *Aussem Book of Hours*, fols. 103v–104r, in the following links: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/92114/leaf-from-aussem-hours-prayer-to-the-three->

discussed page of the *London-Rothschild Hours*. In correspondence of the illumination with the announcement to the shepherds, there are four precious brooches meticulously depicted in the borders, interspersed with abbreviated inscription for *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (fig. 3).²⁹ These words indicated the incipit of the *Gloria* hymn, still recited in Catholic Mass. The hymn begins with the words that the angels sang announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds.³⁰ This confirms a direct connection of the narrative vignette and the borders, with the latter amplifying and explaining the message of the former.

As in this last case, not only devotional jewels were included in this type of book illumination, but also flowers-shaped and abstract jewelry pieces were very commonly represented in Flemish books of hours. This fact seems to suggest that representations of secular jewelry could also serve a religious purpose. As discussed before, during the Middle Ages and the modern era, gemstones and precious metals were acknowledged as materials with an inherent religious relevance. Thanks to their bright and luminous appearance, they were believed to be link elements between the terrestrial world and divine nature.³¹

Jewelry depictions seem to have had a relevant role also in the construction of self-identity of book owners. Such kinds of books were personal objects, which can be exhibited, but mainly served in a private context, during daily domestic prayer. They were highly expensive luxury goods, specifically intended for wealthy clients. In addition, the fact that books of hours were intended for private devotion, may have led to less fixed decorative schemes than liturgical books, and surely favored a taste for lavish decorations. As previous investigations tend to confirm, within a given social context, religious sentiments and religious identity could in fact be fashioned and conveyed via devotional objects.³² For all these reasons, jewelry depictions could be further analyzed in connection with the personal identity of book owners. Previous research demonstrated that jewelry pieces were copied from ac-

magi-adoration-of-the-magi-with-illusionistic-text-and-jewels-in-margins/ and <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/92115/leaf-from-aussem-hours-prayer-to-the-three-magi-foliate-initial-a-with-illusionistic-text-and-jewels-in-margins/> (last accessed on May 20, 2023).

²⁹ The facsimile of the book is accessible via the following link: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_35313_fs001r (last accessed on May 20, 2023).

³⁰ Gospel of Luke, 2: 14.

³¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011); *Matter of Faith* (see note 7).

³² Serena Franzon, "Moderare il lusso, esibire l'identità cattolica: Monili devozionali nell'Italia della Controriforma," *Oltre l'ornamento: Il gioiello tra identità, lusso e moderazione*, ed. Giovanna Baldissin Molli and Serena Franzon (Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2020), 59–68, with further bibliography.

tual jewels.³³ Flemish illuminators used to paint extremely illusionistic pieces, possibly taken from the actual jewelry collection of the book's owner. A rosary depicted in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves seems to reinforce this hypothesis, because its little purse is embroidered with two letters: *CD*, for *Catherina Duxissa* (Catherine the Duchess).³⁴

The so-known *Book of Hours of Mary of Burgundy* contains two examples that visually explain both the role of jewelry during domestic prayer and the importance of book illumination in constructing self-perception. This Book of Hours could be ascribed to the eighth decade of the fifteenth century and has long been believed to have been made for Mary of Burgundy, the daughter and only child of Charles the Bold, the Duke of Burgundy. The book contains 20 full-page miniatures, of which the folio 14v and the 43v are of particular interest, because they show pieces of jewelry in their context of devotional use (figs. 5–6).

The woman in the folio 14v, possibly Mary of Burgundy, is reading a book of hours (fig. 5). On the open book, it is possible to identify the incipit of a prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mary: *Obsecro te Domina sancta maria* (I Beseech Thee, Holy Mary). Through the open window, the apparition of the Virgin and Child literally embody the prayer. The whole page seems to visualize how the process of meditation happened, according to principles of Modern Devotion. The woman is placed also inside the apparition, kneeling to the Virgin, visualizing the process of self-identification in devotional scenes. It is relevant to notice the presence of a jewel in close proximity to the book. The gold necklace with pearls and two gems, possibly a point cut diamond and a ruby, probably is not shown there by chance: it should have been beheld and manipulated during the prayer.³⁵

Folio 43v reinforces the hypothesis that jewels had an important role during domestic practice of devotion (fig. 6). *Christ nailed to the Cross* is shown through a carved stone window. On the foreground, a prayer book is shown near a lavish pearl prayer string, with a gold filigree perfumed globe, or *pomander*, and its small purse; the latter is similar to the one represented together with the prayer string in the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves. A ring and a necklace appear in this illumination too. According to Susie Nash, these objects were used in everyday practices of devotion by the book owner, who recognized them in the illumination.³⁶

This sort of “photographic” catalog probably reinforced self-identification in personal luxury objects. With this connotation, depictions of precious jewels

³³ Franzon, “Il gusto per l'oreficeria dipinta” (see note 17), 139–48, with further bibliography.

³⁴ See <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-catherine-of-cleves/311> (last accessed on Feb. 3, 2023).

³⁵ Probably also the red carnations near the jewel were used in a similar way.

³⁶ Susie Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 275.



Fig. 5: Master of Mary of Burgundy, Book of Hour of Mary of Burgundy, ca. 1470–1477, Vienna, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 1857, fol. 14v (© Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Creative commons license), detail

might have acted as status symbols, helping the book owner to recognize both the book and the jewels as material emanations of his personal identity. This last aspect is even more evident in Italian illumination, as it will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Jewelry Depictions in Italian Illumination: Antiquarian Style as a Public Display of Cultural Power

Within the Italian context, representations of jewelry pieces first featured in the Borso d'Este Bible.³⁷ This lavish religious book was made between 1455 and 1461 for the Duke of Ferrara. Gems and pearls on gold leaf backgrounds appear in several pages of this Bible, as well as geometrical pendants with pearls and red or

37 Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Lat. 422–423=V.G. 12–13.



Fig. 6: Master of Mary of Burgundy, Book of Hour of Mary of Burgundy, ca. 1470–1477, Vienna, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 1857, fol. 43v (© Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Creative commons license), detail

blue gemstones.³⁸ As discussed in a previous article, only one of these jewelry pieces could be considered as a copy of an actual jewel.³⁹ All jewelry pieces depicted in the Borso d'Este Bible present a geometric shape, too regular or too abstract to find some correspondence in actual jewelry. Fictive jewelry became in fact a widespread decorative trend in several Italian manuscripts of the last part of the fifteenth century. Although previous studies show that Italian illuminators

³⁸ See, for example, fols. 69v and 70r vol.1I. The fac-simile of this Bible could be seen at the following link: <http://www.wdl.org/en/item/9910/view/1/1/> (last accessed on May 20, 2023). Federica Toniolo, “Descrizione delle miniature del primo volume della Bibbia,” *La Bibbia di Borso d'este, commentario al codice*, 2 vols. (Franco Cosimo Panini Modena 1997), 155–237. Federica Toniolo, “Descrizione delle miniature del secondo volume della Bibbia,” *La Bibbia di Borso d'este, commentario al codice*, 2 vols. (Franco Cosimo Panini Modena, 1997), 499–574.

³⁹ I am referring to the pendant in the folio 25v of the first volume. <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/9910/view/1/500/> (last accessed on May 20, 2023). See Franzon, “Il gusto per l'oreficeria dipinta” (see note 17), 139–48.

took inspiration from Flemish books of hours, they clearly differed in intention and results.⁴⁰

Girolamo da Cremona, an Italian illuminator working in the Bible of Borso d'Este, made the largest contribution to the diffusion of jeweled borders in Italian books. He systematically incorporated representations of brooches with pearls and colored gems, combining them with classical-inspired cameos and lavish gold settings (fig. 7).⁴¹

Girolamo was a famous artist that influenced many Italian illuminators, such as Giovanni Todeschino or the Master of the seven Virtues. As discussed by Giovanna Baldissin Molli, these artists took inspiration from actual pieces of jewelry, but used those suggestions to create geometrical, fictional jewelry.⁴² Representing actual objects seems to be an element of secondary importance in Italian manuscripts, in contrast with Flemish ones.

In Italian illuminations, pieces of jewelry were usually included in articulated pastiches of antiquarian elements: columns, cameos, ancient coins, garlands, and armors.⁴³ In such pastiches, jewels could appear completely out of scale. This is the case, for example, of an illuminated page attributed to Cristoforo Maiorana, in which a precious brooch bearing an eagle on its top is represented hanging from a column (fig. 8).

In Italy, representations of precious items seem to have acted as a means of public display of economic and cultural power. Jeweled clusters are usually inserted in the composition of the architectural frontispieces, or in the borders, and took part in creating a general antiquarian appearance. Jewelry, as well as objects from classical antiquity, were extremely expensive items. Nevertheless, these objects conveyed not only economic power, but also the cultural status of the owner. As stated by Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, Italian Renaissance objects of art were intended to display the virtues of their owners.⁴⁴ Antiquarian-style artifacts

40 Herman, "Excavating the Page" (see note 17), 90–211; Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "La miniatura ingioiellata di Girolamo da Cremona," *Miniatura. Lo sguardo e la parola. Studi in onore di Giordana Mariani Canova*, ed. Federica Toniolo and Gennaro Toscano (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2012), 285–91.

41 Daniele Guernelli, "Perle ai margini. Una nuova testimonianza di Girolamo da Cremona," *Bibliotheca* 5.1 (2016): 151–71. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309179009_Perle_ai_margini_Una_nuova_testimonianza_di_Girolamo_da_Cremona (last accessed on May 20, 2023).

42 Molli, "La miniatura ingioiellata" (see note 40), 285–91.

43 Molli, "La miniatura ingioiellata" (see note 40), 285–91. *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450–1550*. Exhibition catalog (London, October 27, 1994–January 22, 1995, and New York, February 15–May 7, 1995), ed. Jonathan J. Alexander (Munich: Prestel Pub, 1994).

44 Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (London: British Museum Press, 2001).



Fig. 7: Girolamo da Cremona, *Commentario al Problemata di Aristotele*, Venice, Johannes Herbolt de Seligenstadt, 25 febbraio 1482, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 169 D. 2, c. 2r (© Creative commons license), detail

communicated social virtue and erudition, and were means of building an individual's honor and public reputation. Contrary to Flemish illuminators, who included jewelry only in books for private devotion, Italian artists represented pieces of jewelry in liturgical books as well as in humanistic treatises, vernacular texts and prayer books.

The fact that Italian representations of jewelry are less illusionistic than Flemish ones is probably due to two reasons. The first is that geometrical and abstract shapes were in line with the rediscovery of classical treatises on geometry, and re-



Fig. 8: Cristoforo Maiorana, frontispiece, Aristoteles, *The Physics*, 1496, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Phil. Gr. 2, fol. 1r (© Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)

call the principles of geometric perspective.⁴⁵ The second is that cameos were the only ancient jewels known at that time. Indeed, actual classical cameos are meticulously depicted in Italian illuminated borders (fig. 9).

In Florentine illumination, ancient cameos were used as a sort of repertoire of poses and iconographic themes. For example, it was attested that Italian illuminators had access to metal casts of classical cameos from the Medici collection, that

⁴⁵ Molli, “La miniatura ingioiellata” (see note 40), 285–91.

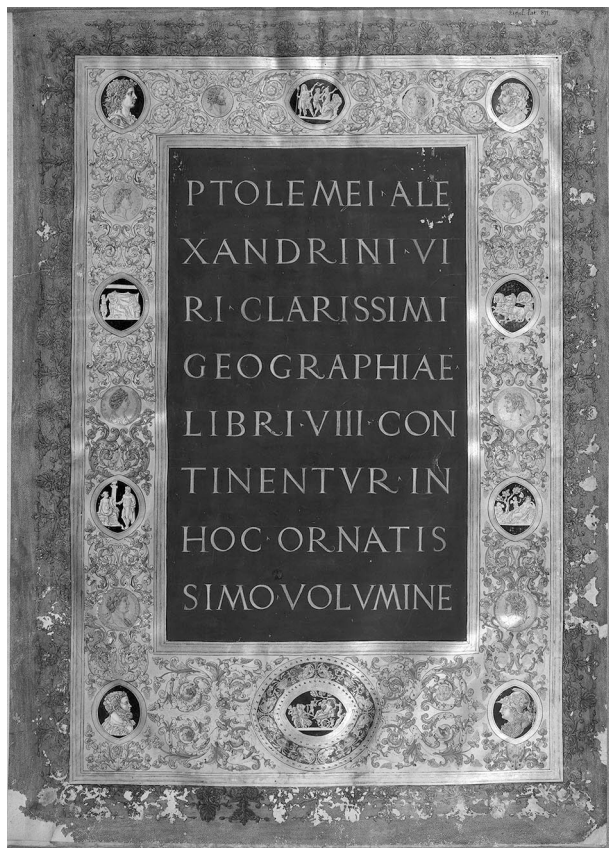


Fig. 9: Attavante degli Attavanti, Frontispiece, Ptolomeus, *Geographiae Libri*, 1476–1480, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Lat 8834, fol. 1r (© Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

were in fact depicted in several book borders.⁴⁶ These cameos depictions provided reference to classical art into early modern books and seem devoid of allegorical meanings. In contrast with Flemish illumination, in Italy the same cameos are reproduced several times in books of different subjects, and without any manifest link with the text or with the book owner. This is the case of the opening page of the *Geography* of Ptolemy, illuminated by Attavante degli Attavanti for Mattia

⁴⁶ *The Painted Page* (see note 43).

Corvinus between 1476 and 1480. In this illuminated page, it is possible to recognize the copies of at least five cameos from the Medici collection (fig. 9).⁴⁷

Conclusions

This essay tends to demonstrate that similar decorative motifs could convey different meanings, depending on the context. Jewelry represented in Flemish books of hours served a devotional aim and were used as mnemonic aids during domestic prayer. They were copied from actual jewels and probably represented treasured possessions of the book owners. This fact reinforces the idea that the book was a personal property, in strong connection with the identity of its owner. In Italian manuscripts, the presence of jewelry is independent from the book's content. It conveys the exquisite taste and erudition of Italian humanists, reinforcing their self-identification in classical virtues.

⁴⁷ Clifford M. Brown, "Introduction," *Engraved Gems: Survival and Revivals*, ed. Clifford M. Brown. Studies in the History of Art, 54 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1997), 9–12.

List of Illustrations

Illustrations for the contribution by Anne L. Williams

1. Giotto di Bondone, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
2. Giotto di Bondone, Marriage of the Virgin, 1303–1305, north wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
3. Taddeo Gaddi, Marriage of the Virgin, ca. 1330, Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence (photo © Scala/Art Resource, NY)
4. Giotto di Bondone, Hell, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
5. Giotto di Bondone, detail of trumpeting demon and demons pulling the damned into hell by their purse strings, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
6. Giotto di Bondone, detail of Enrico Scrovegni and damned soul hiding behind the cross, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
7. Giotto di Bondone, detail of old man buying sex, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
8. Giotto di Bondone, detail of bishop and friar exchanging money in Hell, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
9. Giotto di Bondone, east chancel arch, Arena Chapel, 1303–1305, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)
10. Giotto di Bondone, detail of Judas hanging below three hanging usurers, Last Judgment, 1303–1305, west wall, Arena Chapel, Padua (photo by permission of the Comune di Padova – Assessorato alla Cultura)

Illustrations for the contribution by Avia Shemesh

1. Pórtico de la Gloria, detail, Santiago Cathedral, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1168–1188 (image source: Avia Shemesh)
2. Pórtico de la Gloria, detail, Santiago Cathedral, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1168–1188 (image source: Avia Shemesh)
3. Santo Domingo, Soria, detail (image source: Avia Shemesh)
4. San Esteban de Moradillo de Sedano, detail (image source: Avia Shemesh)
5. Musicians Performing, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)
6. Musicians Performing, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)
7. Union Ceremony, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)
8. Priest Blessing the Feast, Sculpted Corbel, refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

9. Musicians Performing, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)
10. Food Serving, Sculpted Corbel, Refectory, Palacio Gelmírez, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, mid thirteenth century (image source: Avia Shemesh)

Illustrations for the contribution by Sharon Khalifa-Gueta

1. French, Cuir ciselé case, 1491, Morgan Library and Museum, New York (M1092) (© Morgan Library and Museum)
2. Jan van Eyck, Arnolfini Portrait, 1434, Oil on panel, 82.2 cm × 60 cm, National Gallery, London (public domain)
3. Jean Bourdichon, Saint Margaret and the Dragon, Les Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne, 1500–1508, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms latin 9474, fol. 205v (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
4. Piero della Francesca, The Resurrection, Fresco, 1463, 225 cm × 200 cm, Museo Civico, Sansepolcro (public domain), detail
5. Saint Margaret and the Dragon, miniature illustration from the Book of Hours of Jean, Duke of Berry, 1415, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, Ms. 650, fol. 146r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
6. Medusa Hystera and “the Holy Rider” Vanquishing a She-Demon amulet, lead, ca. eleventh to twelfth century, D. 4.35 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (© Jeffrey Spier)
7. Holy Rider amulet, Byzantine, bronze, ca. 6th–7th centuries, 5.4 cm x 5.1 cm x 0.08 cm, Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Washington, DC (BZ. 1950.15) (© Dumbarton Oaks Museum)
8. Berthold Furtmeyr, Eve and Lilith, Furtmeyr Bible, after 1465, Munich, Bavarian State Library, BSB, Cgm 8010a, fol. 10r (© Bavarian State Library)

Illustrations for the contribution by Dafna Nissim

1. Jean Colombe, Laval in prayer in front of the Virgin and Child, The Book of Hours of Louis de Laval, 1470–1475 and 1480–1485, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 920, fols. 50v and 51r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
2. French, Jean of Berry kneels in front of the elevated Host, The Petites Heures, 1375 and 1385–90, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 18014, fol. 172r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
3. Master of the Missal of Yale, The Owner and His Family in front of the Descent from the Cross, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Latin 1179, fols. 1v–2r (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
4. Master of the Coronation of the Virgin, The Golden Legend of Jean de Vignay, ca. 1403, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Français 242, fol. Ar (source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
5. Master of Flémalle, Mérode Triptych, ca. 1425, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain)

Illustrations for the contribution by Orly Amit

1. Psalm 1: The young prince at prayer, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 13r (© British Library Board)
2. Psalm 26(27): The young prince presented by St. Louis to the Virgin and Child, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, London, The British Library Board, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 50r (© British Library Board)

3. Psalm 38(39): The young prince presented by St. Catherine to the Virgin and Child, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 75r (© British Library Board)
4. Psalm 52(53): The young prince praying before Christ as Man of Sorrow, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 98r (© British Library Board)
5. Psalm 1: David fighting Goliath; King David playing his harp, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 13r (© British Library Board)
6. Psalm 109 (110): The young prince before God, Psalter of Henry VI, ca. 1405–1410, London, the British library, Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, fol. 207r (© British Library Board)

Illustrations for the contribution by Karen Casey Casebier

1. Chevalier, *La Vie des pères*, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5204, fol. 147r (Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)
2. Chevalier, *La Vie des pères*, The Hague, KB 71 A 24, fol. 123r (© The Hague, KB)
3. Chevalier, *La Vie des pères*, Brussels, KBR 9229–30, fol. 122r (© Brussels, KBR)
4. Chevalier, historiated letter, *La Vie des pères*, Brussels, KBR 9229–30, fol. 122r (© Brussels, KBR)

Illustrations for the contribution by Serena Franzon

1. Petrus Christus, Saint Eligius (A goldsmith in his shop), 1449, New York, Metropolitan Museum (©Metropolitan Museum, public domain), detail
2. Gentile da Fabriano, The Adoration of the magi, 1423, Gallerie degli Uffizi (© Creative commons license), detail
3. Announcement to the shepherds, Rothschild Hours, ca. 1500, London, British Library, Add 35313, fol. 95v (© London, British Library)
4. Master of the Maximilian Hours, Pentecost, Book of Hours, post 1488, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 311, fol. 21v (© Oxford, Bodleian Library)
5. Master of Mary of Burgundy, Book of Hour of Mary of Burgundy, ca. 1470–1477, Vienna, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 1857, fol. 14v (© Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Creative commons license), detail
6. Master of Mary of Burgundy, Book of Hour of Mary of Burgundy, ca. 1470–1477, Vienna, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 1857, fol. 43v (© Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Creative commons license), detail
7. Girolamo da Cremona, Commentario al Problemata di Aristotele, Venice, Johannes Herbort de Seligenstadt, 25 febbraio 1482, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 169 D. 2, c. 2r (© Creative commons license), detail
8. Cristoforo Maiorana, frontispiece, Aristoteles, The Physics, 1496, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Phil. Gr. 2, fol. 1r (© Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)
9. Attavante degli Attavanti, Frontispiece, Ptolomeus, Geographiae Libri, 1476–1480, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Lat 8834, fol. 1r (© Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

Notes on Contributors

Orly Amit is a doctoral candidate at the Art History Department at Tel-Aviv University. Her doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Dr. Renana Bartal, examines the motives and implications of changes in ownership of late-medieval personal prayer books from England and France, and shows how their acquisition, adaptation, and appropriation helped to construct the identities of their new owners. She is a recipient of the Rotenstreich Scholarship for Outstanding Doctoral Students in the Humanities.
orlyamit@mail.tau.ac.il

Tovi Bibring is an Associate Professor in Medieval Studies at the Department of French Culture at Bar-Ilan University, she was a Masada fellow at Worcester College, Oxford for the academic year 2021–2022. Her current research focuses on comparative readings between Jewish and Christians narratives. Her forthcoming book, *“The Patient, the Impostor and the Seducer”*, is dedicated to medieval literature in Hebrew and to three of its finest representatives: Berechiah ha-Nakdan, Yaakov ben El'azar, and Immanuel ha-Romi.
Tovi.Bibring@biu.ac.il

Karen (Casey) Casebier is an Associate Professor of French at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where she teaches all levels of the French language, literature, and culture. Her principal area of research is the conflation of the sacred and the profane across different genres of thirteenth-century French literature, including saints' lives, romance, and the *fabliaux*. Other research interests include manuscript studies, bestiaries, and Arthurian graphic novels.
karen-casebier@utc.edu

Albrecht Classen is University Distinguished Professor of German Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson. He has published currently 123 scholarly books on German and European medieval and early modern literature, most recently *Wisdom from the European Middle Ages* (2022), and *The Secret in Medieval Literature* (2022). He is the editor of the journals *Mediaevistik* and *Humanities Open Access* and serves on many different boards of international journals dedicated to the Humanities. In 2004, he received the *Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band* (Order of Merit) from the German government. In 2012, he was awarded the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Arizona Professor of the Year Award. In 2017, he was given the rank of Grand Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Three Lions (GKCL), and in 2022 he received the award of Honorary Member of the American Association of Teachers of German.
aclassen@arizona.edu

Serena Franzon is a faculty member of the Fondazione Lisio in Florence. She received her Ph.D. in History, Criticism, and Conservation of Cultural Heritage from the University of Padova. She has collaborated on research and exhibition projects with the Antoniano Museum in Padova and the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. Her research interests lie in the history of fashion and Italian Renaissance jewelry.
serena.franzon@gmail.com

Sharon Khalifa-Gueta is a Lecturer at Sapir College and a research fellow at the University of Haifa at the department of Art History. She is an expert in ancient Greco-Roman and Egyptian art, and Italian Renaissance art. She specializes in representations of dragons and is particularly interested in images concerned with women and dragons. She was awarded the Rotenstreich Scholarship for excellent doctoral students in the Humanities (2016–2019) and the Spinoza Post-Doctoral Scholarship for excellence in History and Arts (2020–2021). Her book *The Woman and the Dragon in Premodern Art* is coming up in 2023 with Amsterdam University Press.

skhali18@campus.haifa.ac.il

Website: <https://www.sharon-dragon.com/>

Dafna Nissim is a Lecturer of Art History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Her research areas are the History of Emotions, Reception of Art, and medieval Perception. Nissim has received several scholarships among them: Chateaubriand Fellowship and Erasmus Scholarship. In the summer of 2022, she stayed at Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes in Paris for a short-term post-doc. Currently, she is working on a book entitled *Shaping Noble Appearance at Philip the Good's Court, 1419–1467: The Social Skin, the Gaze, and Self-Perception*.

dafnani@post.bgu.ac.il

Revital Refael-Vivante is an Associate Professor at the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. Her research focuses on Medieval Hebrew Literature, especially secular poetry, Maqama, rhymed prose, and fables (Berechiah ha-Nakdan). She is the author of *A Treasury of Fables: Isaac ibn Sahula's Meshal Haqadmoni – Text and Subtext* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2017) and *Las Andanzas de de Sofár: Edición crítica y estudio de un cuento hebreo Maasé Sofar (Salónica 1600)* (Universidad de Granada, 2019), in collaboration with S. Refael.

vivante@biu.ac.il

Avia Shemesh completed her Ph.D. in the Art History Department at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 2021. She specializes in medieval European musical iconography, having written her dissertation on the musical imagery of church portals in Romanesque Spain and France. While writing her Ph.D., Dr. Shemesh was a member of the prestigious Mandel Research Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and conducted field research in Spain.

avia.z.shemesh@gmail.com

Vered Tohar is an Associate Professor in the Department of the Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. Her research focuses on Jewish traditional narratives from a diachronic and comparative perspective. She is the author of: *Abraham in the Furnace: A Rebel in a Pagan World* (2010); *The Book of Tales, Sermons and Legends, Ferrara 1554* (2016), and *The Hebrew Folktale in Pre-Modern Morality Literature* (to be published in 2023). She is a co-editor of: *Tell Me about It: Aspects in Narrative Analysis* (2010); *Religious Stories in Transformation* (2016), *Jerusalem and Other Holy Places* (2020).

vered.tohar@biu.ac.il

Anne L. Williams is an Assistant Professor of Art History at The University of Hong Kong. Her research addresses late medieval and early modern sanctity, masculinity, humor, and rhetoric. She is the author of *Satire, Veneration, and St. Joseph in Art, c. 1300–1550* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), as well as of articles published in *Gesta*, *IKON*, and the *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*.

alwms@hku.hk

Index

- Aboab Isaac ben Abraham 44
adultery 26, 37, 77, 125, 134–136, 138–141
Aesop 28
amulet 101f., 114–117, 120–123, 250
angel 11, 35, 38, 57, 59f., 73, 85, 90, 107, 149, 165, 168, 173, 176f., 179, 184, 206, 240
antiquarian style 242
apocalypse 89
Aquinas, Thomas 70, 72, 74, 184
Aristophanes 126, 128, 141
ascension 166, 182
Augustine, saint 170, 184
Avianus 28
- Bahya ben Joseph Ibn Paquda 44
Bakhtin, Michael 53f., 77
Bascom, William 55
Ben Elyaqim, Isaac of Posen 50
Ben Moses de Vidas, Elijah 51
Ben Yequiel, Yehiel 44
Bernard of Clairvaux 166, 177
Bible 20, 37, 42–44, 52, 105, 117f., 149, 153, 159, 161, 189, 242–244, 250
Birdsley, Monroe 55
blasphemy 194, 196
Boccaccio, Giovanni 5, 35, 57, 68, 76
Bonaventure 70, 176, 184
Bonerius, Ulrich 10, 15, 28–34, 39
Book of Proverbs (Bible) 161, 185, 198
books of hours 27, 111, 165, 167, 172, 185–187, 190, 235, 237–240, 244, 248
Borso d'Este 229, 242–244
broomcod badge 196f.
- Calcatio colli* 111
cameos collections 229
Camino de Santiago 79, 90f.
carnival 54, 77
censorship 41, 56
Chanson de Geste 6, 132, 142
Charles VI of France 185
Chaucer, Geoffrey 6, 35, 39, 186
childbirth 101–103, 109, 113–115, 117–123, 210
- Chrétien de Troyes 12, 21, 125f., 129, 133, 205, 212f., 215
Christians and Jews, see also Jews and Christians 159
Christine de Pizan 30, 185–189, 192, 196–198, 201f.
Christ, see also: Jesus
Chroniques 9, 200
cistercian monasteries 166
Cligès 12, 125f., 129–132, 143
Codex Calixtinus 79, 81f., 89f.
cognitive-emotional experience 165f.
cognitive reception 165, 168f.
Colome, Jean 173f.
Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum 180
contemplation (prayer practice) 152, 165, 182–185, 190, 208, 216, 223, 239
courtly love literature 125, 129
- Dante Alighieri 40, 69, 72
David (Biblical figure) 2, 10, 15, 19, 21, 54, 89, 117, 146, 153, 161, 169, 173, 187, 191f., 196, 198f., 211, 213, 251
debate 117, 119, 131, 134, 151, 154–159, 163, 194, 206
devotion 10, 13, 27, 30, 57, 90, 165f., 168, 170, 178f., 181–183, 189f., 201, 205, 209–211, 214f., 217, 219, 222, 224–226, 235f., 238–241, 245
Diego Gelmírez 82f.
dragon 11, 59, 63, 101–115, 117–119, 121–123, 250
duality 18, 146, 156
- elders of the apocalypse 79, 84
emotions, history of 1–3, 9f., 44, 75, 121, 137, 141
enclosed garden 165, 180f.
- fable 10, 12, 28–31, 33f., 39, 41, 46, 51f., 81, 91, 107, 145, 147–154, 156, 163
Fausse mort 12, 125, 129, 131f.
fear of God 145f., 156, 160, 162f.

- fin'amor 125, 134, 137f.
Five Books on Consideration 177
 fool (*insapiens*) 29, 31, 49, 152, 196, 198
 France 4, 6, 9, 17, 60, 81, 89, 92, 101, 106, 108,
 117, 150, 153, 159, 166–168, 171f., 175f., 178,
 182, 186–189, 194, 200, 211, 214, 217, 221,
 247, 250–252
 Froissart, Jean 9, 200
- Galicia 80, 82, 88, 91, 95f.
 gender 4f., 7, 102, 119, 125, 128f., 131f., 136–
 138, 141
 Geoffrey of Vinsauf 173
 Girolamo da Cremona 229, 244f., 252
 Goliath (Biblical figure) 198f., 251
 good advice 151, 156, 159f., 163
 Gottfried von Strassburg 15, 24–26, 39
 grail 22, 39
 Gregory the Great 184
- habitus 1
 Ha-Kohen ha-Itamari Elijah 51
 Hartmann von Aue 15, 21, 39
 Henri Suso 182
 Henry VI of England 186
 Herodotus 125–128
 hidden message 148f., 156
Histoires 125f., 222
Horologium sapientiae 182
 hortus conclusus, see also: enclosed garden 165,
 180
Ḥovot ha-Levavot 41, 44, 50f.
 hygieia 113
hystera 101, 114f., 250
- Ibn Gabirol, Solomon 50
 illuminated books 13, 229
 Isaac ben Shlomo Ibn Sahula 12, 145, 147
 Isabeau de Bavaria, Queen of France 188
 Italian art 77
- Jacobus de Voragine 101, 105f.
 Jean de Carrouges 200
 Jean de Waurin 200
 Jean, Duke of Berry 17, 103, 108f., 111f., 114,
 122, 129, 131, 136, 167f., 171f., 177f., 182–
 184, 186–189, 195, 208f., 212, 219, 250f.
- Jews and Christians, see also Christians and Jews
 151
 John, duke of Berry 2f., 6f., 61, 64, 69, 71, 74,
 82, 84, 89, 109, 117, 170, 175, 177, 181, 187,
 200, 209, 239
 John of Salisbury 188, 205, 212, 217
 Judeo-Arabic 41, 43, 50
 judicial combat 199, 201
- kabbalah 12, 43, 145, 147, 206
 Kaidanover, Zvi Hirsch 51
 Kaufringer, Heinrich 10, 15, 34–39
Kumu Re'im 148, 151
- Ladino 43
Lai d'Iguanré 12, 125, 133
 last judgment 11, 57–59, 62–66, 68, 70, 73,
 83, 249
 lay people 1, 4, 166
 lay piety 175
 legenda 105f., 121, 129, 208
 Le Gris, Jacques 200
locus amoenus 2
 Louis, Duke of Guyenne 3, 12, 101, 116, 167f.,
 176, 185–189, 191–194, 196, 198, 200–203,
 250f.
 Louis, Duke of Orléans 3, 12, 101, 116, 167f.,
 176, 185–189, 191–194, 196, 198, 200–203,
 250f.
 Louis of Laval 12, 165, 167, 176f., 184
Lysistrata 125–128, 139
- Ma'alot ha-Middot* 44
 man of sorrow, see also: vir dolorum 196
 manuscripts 3f., 6, 10, 77, 80, 89, 103, 106,
 165, 167, 169, 173f., 185, 187, 190, 194, 205–
 208, 210, 218f., 221–223, 229, 235–238,
 240, 243f., 248
 Marie de France 28, 33, 128, 136
 Mary (Mother of Jesus), see also: The Virgin
 Mary of Burgundy 229, 241–243, 252
 Master Mateo 83
 meditation (prayer practice) 143, 167, 169, 174,
 181, 190, 219, 223, 226, 238f., 241
Menorat ha-Ma'or 44f., 50
 mental images 172f., 238

- Meshal HaQadmoni* 12, 145, 147f., 151f., 154–158, 162f.
 mirrors for princes (*speculum principum*) 185, 187–191, 193f., 202
 mitzvot 145, 150
 mnemonic devices 229, 238
 monumental art 10f., 79, 94
Musar Literature, see also: Jewish ethics 48
 musical iconography 11, 79, 81, 88f., 97, 99
 mysticism 26, 42, 104, 166, 181, 206

Nibelungenlied 15, 20f., 39
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 16
 noble patrons 165, 173
 non-literary prose 42

 olibrius 101, 106
 organistrum 84f., 95
Orhot Şaddiqim 41, 45

 pain, physical 57, 66, 101f., 118, 121f., 131, 139
 parable 45, 47–49, 52, 149
 paratext 3, 5, 205–207, 222
 patron 4, 6, 11, 20, 27, 57f., 68f., 79, 99, 165, 167, 170, 172–174, 180, 187, 192, 196, 211, 219, 223
 pearl 101, 106, 109, 239, 241f., 244
 pilgrim badges 235f.
 Pintoin, Michel 9, 200
Poetria nova 173f.
Policraticus 188, 212, 217
 polyphony 53f., 89
 popular justice 126
 Pórtico de la Gloria 83
 portrait 12, 75, 105, 143, 165–168, 176f., 179f., 186, 191, 232, 250
 Prague 41
 prayer 37f., 87, 90f., 107, 155, 165, 168, 170, 183f., 186f., 189f., 192, 196, 198, 201f., 219, 238–241, 245, 248, 250f.
 prayer practice 187, 190
 printed books 4, 10, 103
 prolonged gaze 165, 169–171
Psalms (Bible) 45f., 185f., 191, 194, 196, 198, 201f.
 punishment 48, 91, 126, 131, 135, 139, 141, 154

Qav Yashar 51

 Rabi Yosef Kara 153
 Radak 145, 153
 Rashi 145, 153
 reader-response criticism 1f.
 reception studies 1f., 8
 redemption 39, 145, 150f., 166
 religious controversy 145, 151
 Renaissance 2f., 5, 13, 19, 27, 34, 38, 57, 59f., 68, 70, 75, 77, 102f., 117, 119, 170, 175, 186, 211, 229–233, 235, 241, 244
Rēshit Hokhmah 45, 51
 Richard of St. Victor 181f.
 Romanesque 9, 59, 68, 79–81, 83, 86, 89f.
 Romulus 28
 royalty 4, 92, 191
 Rupert of Deutz 180

 Sacchetti, Franco 39, 68
 Saint Margaret 101–113, 117–123, 250
 Saint Victor's Abbey in Paris 166
 Santiago de Compostela 11, 79–85, 89–96, 98, 249f.
 Santiago de Compostela Cathedral 79f.
 Santiago de Compostela, see also: Archbishop's Palace
sapientia 191, 198
 Saul (Biblical figure) 153, 199f.
Sēfer Lēv Ṭov 50
 self-identity 133, 187, 229, 240
 self-reflection 1, 190
 seven deadly sins 31, 35, 38
 sex strike 125, 127, 139
Shēveṭ Musar 51
 shibutz 153, 162
 social criticism 52, 148
 social order 54, 126, 132, 135, 140
 Solomon (Biblical figure) 107, 115–117, 127, 131, 191–194
Song of Songs (Bible) 166, 179–181
 Spain 79f., 82–85, 88f., 91–96, 98, 139, 149–151, 155, 157–159, 161, 200, 249f.
Speculum Principum 185f.
 spiritual 1, 5, 12, 15–17, 20, 22, 24, 27–30, 32–35, 38–40, 55, 61, 86, 90f., 96, 120, 146,

- 150, 165–170, 175, 179–185, 187, 190, 205,
208–216, 222–224, 226
- St. Catherine of Alexandria 194
- St. Louis IX 192
- tale 5, 12f., 21, 34f., 46f., 49, 51f., 55f., 75,
106, 125–127, 129, 134, 138–142, 149, 154,
162, 183, 186, 205–211, 215, 217, 219, 223,
225f.
- Tale of Old Bearded Achbor* 12, 125, 139f., 142
- Talmud* 43, 149, 153, 159, 161
- text and image 1, 3, 6, 12f., 102, 106, 205f.,
229, 238
- The Mountain of Contemplation* 182
- The Virgin, see also: Mary
- Tiqun Middot ha-Nefesh* 50
- Torah* 149f., 153, 159f.
- violence 127f., 131, 139–142
- vir dolorum*, see also man of sorrow 196
- Virgin and Child 165, 168, 177, 192, 194, 196,
241
- visual imagery 4f., 10, 170
- visual literacy 190
- wadjet 113
- Walther von der Vogelweide 22–24, 39
- Weber, Max 18f.
- Wisdom of Solomon* 192, 194
- wisdom (*sapientia*) (virtue) 28f., 31–33, 36,
45–49, 51, 150–152, 156–163, 186, 188,
191f., 194, 196, 198
- wise counselors 189
- Wolfger von Erla 20
- Wolfram von Eschenbach 15, 21f., 39
- Yaakov Ben Elazar 12, 125, 139
- Yiddish 41, 43, 56